

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting held on Thursday 29 October 2015 at 2.00pm in the Boardroom, District Council Offices, Monaghan Row, Newry.

Chairperson: Mr J Campbell Independent Member

In Attendance: **(Committee Members)**

Councillor P Brown
Councillor C Casey
Councillor C Enright
Councillor T Hearty
Councillor D Hyland

Officials in Attendance:

Mr E Curtis	Director Strategic Planning & Performance
Mr R Dowey	Head of Finance
Mr S Wright	Officer
Mr G McGivern	Officer
Ms L Dillon	Democratic Services Officer

Also in Attendance: Ms C Hagan ASM (Internal Auditors)

AC/19/2015: APPOINTMENT OF MR JOE CAMPBELL INDEPENDENT MEMBER OF AUDIT COMMITTEE

Mr Dowey welcomed Mr Joe Campbell the newly appointed Independent Member and Chairperson of the Audit Committee to the meeting.

He also introduced Ms Christine Hagan from ASM, who had been appointed to provide internal audit services for the Council.

Mr Dowey introduced the Council Officers present advised that Mr Steve Wright was currently responsible on a temporary basis for carrying out some of the audit and risk investigation work within the Council.

AC/20/2015:- APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

The following apologies were received:

Mr L Hannaway Chief Executive
Councillor C McGrath
Councillor M Murnin
Councillor J Tinnelly

Mr Campbell said he was delighted to be appointed as Independent Member of the Newry Mourne & Down District Council Audit Committee. He explained his past experience was mostly in finance, audit and corporate governance and added he currently held positions in the Audit Committees of SEUPB and NI Commissioner for Children and Young People and had recently been appointed as a non-executive Director of the Western Health & Social Care Trust with specific responsibility for financial oversight. He added he had also held the post of City Treasurer in Derry City Council for 15 years up to November 2013 and he hoped that his experience would be beneficial for the Audit Committee going forward.

AC/21/2015: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Noted: No declarations of interest were received.

AC/22/2015: ACTION SHEET – MINUTES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING THURSDAY 21 JUNE 2015

Read: Action sheet arising out of minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on Thursday 21 June 2015. (Copy circulated)

The following issues were raised arising out of the above Action Sheet:

AC/09/2015 – Internal Audit Annual Assurance Report (NMDC)

ICT issues

Noted: A report has been prepared and passed to ASM Internal Auditors regarding on-going ICT issues within the Council. This matter will be reported back to the Audit Committee via ASM Internal Auditors at a later stage.

Internet Access – Councillors

Noted: Internet access to Councillors to include access to BBC News website.

Completion of Audits

Noted: In response to concerns regarding the lack of information being provided to Internal Audit to allow completion of audits, it was noted that all Directors had been informed that any information requested to complete audits must be prioritised and provided without delay.

AC/06/2015 – Terms of Reference

Noted: Councillor Enright said he was not content that the Audit Committee Terms of Reference reflected Treasury guidelines.

Agreed: It was agreed to note the action sheet arising out of minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting held on Thursday 21 June 2015.

AC/23/2015: RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH EU FUNDED PROJECTS

Read: Report dated 29 October 2015 from Mr S Wright regarding risks associated with EU funded projects. (Copy circulated)

Green Tourism Programme – Invest NI

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Hyland seconded by Councillor Casey it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on this matter which related to exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Casey seconded by Councillor Hyland it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: When the Committee came out of closed session, the Chairman reported it was unanimously agreed as follows:

- (a) Relevant Council Officers to meet with the funding body, Invest NI, to try to resolve matters regarding the Green Tourism Programme.
- (b) Relevant Council Officers to meet with representatives from the legacy Down District Council, Banbridge District Council, Newry & Mourne District Council and Ards Borough Council to discuss matters regarding Invest NI funding for the Green Tourism Programme.
- (c) Following investigation by Officers and when final decision is received from Invest NI, a full report to be compiled regarding funding for the Green Tourism Programme and tabled at the Audit Committee in due course.

Noted: ASM Internal Audit will be conducting a review of grant management which may identify issues relating to the Green Tourism Programme funding.

Ballyholland Community Centre – DARD

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Hyland seconded by Councillor Casey it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on this matter which related to exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Casey seconded by Councillor Hyland it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: When the Committee came out of closed session, the Chairman reported it was noted that on receipt of a reply from DARD, a report will be submitted back to the Audit Committee.

AC/25/2015: PROPOSALS
RE: ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2015-16

Read: Report dated 29 October 2015 from Mr S Wright outlining proposals for an Annual Governance Statement 2015-16 for the new Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. (Copy circulated)

Mr Campbell said that the work involved with the Internal Audit and Risk Management will be an important part of the Annual Governance Statement and added that issues raised in the Annual Governance Statements for the legacy Councils will be reviewed in this year's Internal Audit Plan.

Internal Audit will provide the Audit Committee with an annual assurance.

Noted: Annual Governance Statements for both legacy Councils will have been approved by NIAO as part of their audit of the 2014/15 Annual Accounts.

AC/26/2015: ESTABLISHMENT OF RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK
NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Read: Report dated 29 October 2015 from Mr S Wright outlining a proposed approach for the establishment of a Risk Management Framework for Newry, Mourne and Down District. (Copy circulated)

Noted: It was noted that the necessary structures were not in place at present to allow the implementation of the Risk Management Framework.

Mr Curtis pointed out that risks were being managed by staff on an on-going basis.

Agreed: It was unanimously agreed as follows:

(a) A Draft Risk Management Strategy be drafted for discussion at the Senior Management Team Meeting, and thereafter to be tabled at the next Meeting of the Audit Committee to be held on Thursday 28 January 2016.

(b) A Draft Corporate Risk Register to be completed, including identifying high scoring risks and what mitigating actions have been put in place by Management to manage the risk level, and this document be discussed at the Senior Management Team and

thereafter be tabled for approval at the next Meeting of the Audit Committee to be held on Thursday 28 January 2016.

(c) Roles and responsibilities in terms of managing risk to be identified and all Directors ensure their staff are aware of their responsibilities for risk management, ie, identifying risk, monitoring and managing risk in the absence of an approved Risk Management Framework for the new Council.

Mr Campbell also referred to the post of Audit Services /Risk Investigations Officer which was critical in terms of risk management and the coordinating role with the Internal Auditors and encouraged the Senior Management Team to make arrangements to have this position filled on a permanent basis as soon as possible.

Ms Hagan ASM added that if risk is being managed within the Directorates then those Directorates should be recorded in the Directorate Risk Registers and presented for review at Senior Management Team Meetings. The management of risk could be recorded as a review activity in the Council's development of the Annual Governance Statement.

**AC/27/2015: CONSULTATION
RE: DRAFT CODE OF AUDIT PRACTICE
FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES**

Read: Letter dated 2 September 2015 from NIAO regarding a consultation on the Draft Code of Audit Practice for Local Government Bodies.
(Copy circulated)

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Hyland seconded by Councillor Casey it was agreed to note the above correspondence.

ASM INTERNAL AUDIT

**AC/28/2015:- INTERNAL AUDIT
PROGRESS REPORT**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Hyland seconded by Councillor Casey it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on this matter which related to exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Casey seconded by Councillor Hyland it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: When the Committee came out of closed session, the Chairman reported had been agreed as follows:

(a) On the proposal of Councillor Hyland seconded by Councillor Brown it was agreed to unanimously approve the revised Internal Audit Plan 2015/16, (which included only minor amendments to the titles of two *Assurance Reviews*).

(b) ASM Internal Auditors to provide a summarised Internal Audit Report to the Audit Committee rather than tabling the full reports.

(c) On the proposal of Councillor Casey seconded by Councillor Hyland it was agreed that Council Officials ensure relevant information is furnished to ASM Internal Auditors as a matter of urgency on issues raised in relation to Procurement and Contract Management, to allow the finalisation of the Report by late November/early December 2015.

(d) In light of the timeframe to complete a follow up review of prior year recommendations, ASM Internal Audit will carry out substantive audit work on only those recommendations issued as *limited assurance reviews* and any *priority 1* recommendations raised in respect of the other assurance reviews.

Noted: To note that the majority of the Internal Audit Reports for 2015/16 have been significantly progressed and are on target to be presented at the Audit Committee Meetings in January 2016 and April 2016.

Mr Campbell asked Directors to remind officers of the importance of adhering to the procurement policy.

NIAO

AC/29/2015: NORTHERN IRELAND AUDIT OFFICE

Mr Dowey advised that the following accounts were now signed off by NIAO and a notice will be issued in the press informing the public these Accounts will be available to view via the Council Website.

Shadow Council Accounts
Peace III Accounts
Legacy Newry & Mourne District Council Accounts
Legacy Down District Council Accounts

He added that the Reports to Those Charged with Governance from NIAO in respect of those accounts will be presented at the Audit Committee Meeting in January 2016 by a representative from NIAO.

HEAD OF FINANCE

AC/30/2015: UPDATE RE: AUDIT ISSUES FINANCE AND RISK

Read: Report dated 29 October 2015 from Mr R Dowey, Head of Finance on Audit issues that have arisen and that are likely to arise.
(Copy circulated)

Agreed: It was agreed to mark the above Report noted.

AC/31/2015: TRAINING RE EFFECTIVE AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

Read: Report from Mr R Dowey Head of Finance giving details on training courses provided by On Board Consultancy for Audit Committee Members and outlining the following 2No. options: (Copy circulated)

Training Course – Effective Audit and Risk Committee

Wednesday 4 November 2015

The Mount Conference Centre Belfast

£225 plus VAT per person

or

Training Course provided 'in-house' – half day (3/4 hours)

£750 plus VAT (fixed price)

All members of Audit Committee can attend and any other interested Members

Agreed: It was unanimously agreed to proceed with arrangements with 'On Board Consultancy', to hold a Training Course on Effective Audit and Risk Committee at a cost of £750 plus VAT.

- The training will be open to Members of the Audit Committee and any other interested Councillors.
- To be held before the next Audit Committee Meeting in January 2016.
- Content of training course be tailored to the needs of the Council where possible and the Chairperson of the Audit Committee, Mr J Campbell, to also attend the course.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 3.35pm.

For consideration/noting at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 1 February 2016.

Signed: **R Dowey**
Head of Finance

THE SOMME ASSOCIATION



Vice-President
The Viscount Brookeborough, DL

Chairman
Mr Alan McFarland

Director
Mrs Carol Walker

Honorary President:
H.R.H The Duke of Gloucester, KG, GCVO

233 Bangor Road
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BT23 7PH

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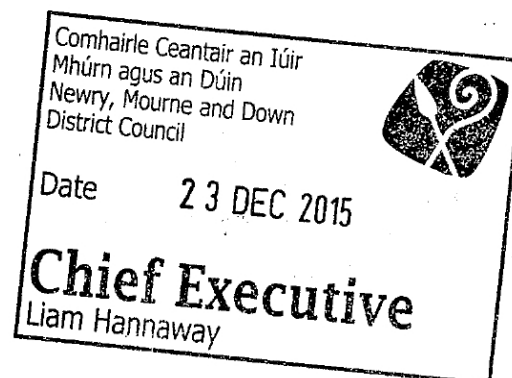
Website: www.sommeassociation.com
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Face Book: The Somme Association

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18th December 2015

Mr John Dumigan
The Chief Executive
Down District Council
Downshire Civic Centre
Downshire Estate
Ardglass Road
Downpatrick, BT30 6GQ



Dear Mr Dumigan

Commemoration of the Centenary of the Battle of the Somme

As you are no doubt aware 1st July 2016 marks the centenary of the start of the Battle of the Somme, a military engagement in which most families throughout Ulster had a relative serving and which unfortunately was to cost many thousands of lives.

The Somme Association, in conjunction with the Northern Ireland and UK governments, is organising the official Northern Ireland commemoration at the Ulster Memorial Tower, Thiepval, France on the afternoon of 1st July 2016. On 2nd July there will be an "Act of Remembrance" at the Memorial to the 16th (Irish) Division at Guillemont. These will be unique occasions and I am honoured to extend an invitation to your Council to attend in solemn recognition of all those from your Council area who served and died during the Battle of the Somme. The Association would particularly welcome representation from each Party to reflect the totality of service from our community.

As you might appreciate the French authorities are prescribing tight security for the commemorations therefore we are arranging a special travel itinerary for the VIP groups. Details of this are attached, and if you are able to avail of this invitation I would ask that you book before 31st January 2016. A limited number of places are available for those wishing to attend.

If you require any further details at this stage please contact Mrs Carol Walker at 02891 823202.

Yours faithfully,

David Campbell
David Campbell, CBE

Chairman – Somme Centenary Committee

THE SOMME ASSOCIATION. IS A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE
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Reg. No. N.I. 24103

VAT Reg. No. GB 517 4525 49

Reg. Charity No. XR64743

THE SOMME ASSOCIATION



Vice-President
The Viscount Brookeborough, DL

Chairman
Mr Alan McFarland

Director
Mrs Carol Walker

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Website: www.sommeassociation.com
Email: sommeassociation@btconnect.com
Face Book: The Somme Association

Honorary President:
H.R.H The Duke of Gloucester, KG, GCVO

18th December 2015

Dear Chief Executive

Please find attached an invite and all the information regarding the Somme Association's tour for the Centenary Commemorations of the Battle of the Somme. As you can appreciate the 2016 tour will be different from previous years, especially due to security arrangements and the prices also reflect the fact that the Euro Finals are also being held in France. We have secured two different hotels in Compiegne so there are two price options based on the hotel you chose.

Each Council is offered a place on the Association's tour as part of the Council's membership of the Association and with this in mind we are able to offer each Council **four** places in 2016 on the Centenary trip. We are aware that some Councils may wish to have more places allocated and some less. As such we would ask that you apply for the amount you want and after the 31st January we will reallocate as availability allows us to. This will be done on a "first come first served basis" after allocation of the four places. I would also ask that if you do not wish to accept your four allocated places you inform us as soon as possible by email to:
claire@sommeassociation.com

The Commemoration tour also includes tickets to the Ulster Memorial Tower Service, the "Beat the Retreat" musical event and Reception on the 2nd July and meals.

Places will only be secured when deposits are received. Deposits will be refunded for any extra places requested but not successfully secured. We anticipate demand to be high so please apply early so as not to be disappointed.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact my PA Mrs Claire McWhirter on 02891823202.

I would like to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Successful New Year.

Yours faithfully

Mrs Carol Walker
Director
Enc.



SOMME COMMEMORATIONS 2016

30th June – 3rd July 2016

Provisional Itinerary

"Subject to change"

The estimated price is £730.00 per person (excludes personal insurance)

Includes: Flights TBC, luxury coach travel throughout with experienced courier. Ferry crossings if required. 2+ Star hotel accommodation is twin bedrooms with private facilities (there will be a single room supplement of £100.00), buffet breakfast and two evening meals included.

Guaranteed tickets to the Ulster Memorial Tower Service and "Beat the Retreat" TBC.

For booking conditions see below

All flights are booked through an ABTA Bonded Agent

Thursday 30th June 2016:- Flights arrangements and times will follow TBC. Hotel Campanille in Compiègne.

Friday 1st July 2016:- Depart hotel for Albert, here guests will disembark coach to clear security then onward to the Ulster Memorial Tower. Northern Ireland's Ceremony will take place at 1430hrs. Lunch provided. Following the service return to Compiègne for dinner.

Saturday 2nd July 2016:- Depart for half day in the Somme area, this will include a short "Act of Remembrance" at the 16th (Irish) Division Memorial at Guillemont. Commemoration Lunch. In the afternoon a visit to Compiègne Armistice Museum. In the evening return to the Somme and Ulster Memorial Tower for a "Beat the Retreat" and Reception in the grounds.

Sunday 3rd July 2016:- Depart hotel for journey home.

To reserve a place on this tour, please complete the slip below. A deposit of £200.00 per person is payable on booking (non-refundable) N.B. No bookings will be accepted without a deposit and completed form. Final payments must be made eight weeks before departure date. The names of those nominated to travel must be submitted by Monday 2nd May 2016 as the airline have a policy on group fares and will charge for any amendments after this date.

Please make cheques payable to **The Somme Association:** and send to Mrs Carol Walker, Director, 233 Bangor Road, Newtownards. BT23 7PH.

Please reserve.....Place(s) on the 2016 Somme Trip I enclose a cheque for £.....

Type of room/rooms.....Name of Contact.....

Address.....

.....PostCode.....

Telephone.....Email.....

Signed.....Date.....

Full names of those travelling.....

Booking Conditions:

Insurance: It is a condition of travel that clients are covered by travel insurance. Bookings can only be accepted on this basis.

Name of Insurance Company and policy number.....



SOMME COMMEMORATIONS 2016

30th June – 3rd July 2016

Provisional Itinerary

"Subject to change"

The estimated price is **£900.00 per person** (excludes personal insurance)

Includes: Flights **TBC**, luxury coach travel throughout with experienced courier. Ferry crossings if required. 3 Star hotel accommodation is **twin bedrooms** with private facilities (**there will be a single room supplement of £100.00**), buffet breakfast and two evening meals included.

Guaranteed tickets to the Ulster Memorial Tower Service and "Beat the Retreat" TBC.

For booking conditions see below

All flights are booked through an ABTA Bonded Agent

Thursday 30th June 2016:- Flights arrangements and times will follow **TBC**. Hotel is the Best Western in Compiègne.

Friday 1st July 2016:- Depart hotel for Albert, here guests will disembark coach to clear security then onward to the Ulster Memorial Tower. Northern Ireland's Ceremony will take place at 1430hrs. Lunch provided. Following the service return to Compiègne for dinner.

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Type of room/rooms.....Name of Contact.....

Address.....

.....PostCode.....

Telephone.....Email.....

Signed.....Date.....

Full names of those travelling.....

Booking Conditions:

Insurance: It is a condition of travel that clients are covered by travel insurance. Bookings can only be accepted on this basis.

Name of Insurance Company and policy number.....

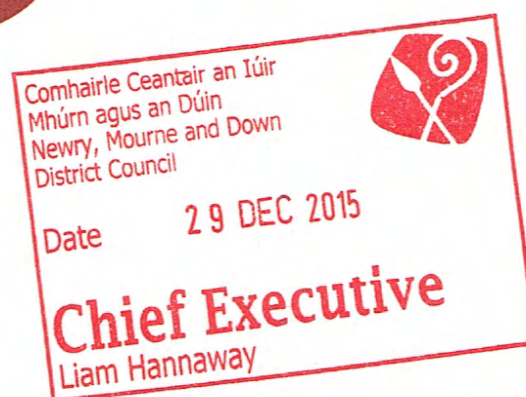
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Mr Liam Hannaway - Chief Executive
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
O'Hagan House
Monaghan Row
NEWRY
BT35 8DJ

23 December 2015

Dear Mr Hannaway



Drumantee Post Office®
3 Ballynamadda Road, Newry, BT35 8TD

Proposed move to new premises & branch modernisation

I'm writing further to my letter dated 29 July 2015 where we advised that the above branch would move to the new location - Costcutter, The Village Shop, 67 The Village, Jonesborough, Newry, BT35 8HR subject to consultation.

The consultation started on 30 July 2015 and concluded on 10 September 2015 and customer comments were collated to form a decision.

I'm pleased to advise you that the potential new operator has now decided to undertake a major redevelopment of the proposed new location subject to planning permission. Once these plans have been finalised we intend to undertake a further period of local public consultation in spring of next year to allow customers to share their views on this new development.

In the interim, thank you for considering our proposal

Yours sincerely

Suzanne Richardson
Regional Network Manager

Report to:	Full Council
Subject:	<i>Consultation Response - Health and Social Care Reform and Transformation: Getting the Structures Right</i>
Date:	1 February 2016
Reporting Officer:	Nicola Doran, Health Inequalities Officer Heather McKee, Assistant Director Community Planning
Contact Officer:	Nicola Doran, Health Inequalities Officer Heather McKee, Assistant Director Community Planning

<u>Decisions Required</u>	
<i>To approve the Response to the Consultation for submission by 12 February 2016</i>	
1.0	<u>Purpose & Background</u>
1.1	The Minister for Health , Social Servicers and Public Safety in the NI Executive has requested feedback on the proposed changes to the Health and Social Care structures. The proposals are to de-layer the Health and Social Care system.
2.0	<u>Key Issues</u>
	The consultation document outlines proposals to : • Reduce bureaucracy • Change accountability and performance management • Change planning and commissioning • Change structures The proposed review of the Health and Social care systems and structures are to address the challenges of: • A growing ageing population • A population with high levels of disability and mental health problems • A rise in the number of chronic conditions people are living with • Unhealthy lifestyles contributing to increases in obesity and diagnoses of type 2 diabetes and • Development in medical technologies and medicines which, whilst opening up new opportunities for treatment, are pushing up costs. • Suicide • Low Educational Attainment The absence of any reference to community planning and the role of local government, or other partners, in addressing the above issues is a concern. Local government and community planning have a significant role in addressing health inequalities and improving the wellbeing of the citizens of our District. These concerns are reflected in the response.

3.0	<u>Resource Implications</u>
	N/A
4.0	<u>Appendices</u>
	▪ Appendix 1: Response to the Consultation

Appendix 1

Health and Social Care: Reform and Transformation

Getting the Structures Right

Response from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

January 2016

Background:

While the Minister for Health sets out his ambition for a “world class” health and social care service, and the consultation document concentrates on a restructuring of the health sector, the challenges he outlines in the document require a multi-faceted, multi agency approach. The Minister outlines a range of challenges which are also currently being grappled with by local government and partners within the context of community planning.

These challenges are:

- A growing ageing population
- A population with high levels of disability and mental health problems
- A rise in the number of chronic conditions people are living with
- Unhealthy lifestyles contributing to increases in obesity and diagnoses of type 2 diabetes and
- Development in medical technologies and medicines which, whilst opening up new opportunities for treatment, are pushing up costs.
- Suicide
- Low Educational Attainment

Unfortunately, a restructuring of the health sector considered in isolation of the wider development context of community planning will not be as effective in addressing these challenges. Therefore, this response attempts to answer the questions set in the consultation in the context of community planning.

Introduction:

Sir Harry Burns, Chief Medical Officer for Scotland (retired) speaking at the International Convention for the International Association for Community

Development (June 2014) stated that creating wellbeing is more complicated than preventing illness. Using various examples he explained that levels of disease are impacted by a range of factors in the life course of an individual. He posited that inequality in Scotland starts at age 15 increasing to age 50 and was caused by drugs, violence, suicide, assault, accidents etc. Therefore, issues such as heart disease, cannot be addressed by just reducing saturated fat in the diet, as an individual’s well-being is connected to a range of social issues.

Vicktor Frankel, a holocaust survivor suggested that people with purpose were more likely to survive the concentration camps. Corey Keyes, an American Psychologist stated that ‘flourishings’ individuals “chose their fate in life instead of being victims of fate”.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council wish to see a revelation in how health and wellbeing is supported and achieved and are willing to work with the health sector to see a realisation of that vision.

Consultation Response questions:

Less Red Tape	Q1. Do you agree that there is too much complexity in the current system and that it is not working to its optimum capacity?
	The Council would agree with this. There is too much complexity in the current system and it is not working to its optimum capacity. 80% of the determinants that effect health sit outside the remit of the Health Sector. It is simple to therefore conclude that partnership working and cross sectored planning are important. Complexity in the current system hinders effective workingin a number

	of ways: 1. Tiers of beaucracy (decision making boards, individuals) in health service creates confusion. Organisations are coming to the table of partnerships with pre set action plans and strategies, not so much to work together but to roll out work assisted by others. As the Minister said in his paper, "current system controls and constraints rather than supporting and enabling innovation". The partnership should begin at the development of plans and strategies, not at the implementation stage. The Minister states the requirement of a commissioning model that is a more accountable and responsive structure that is closer to the people, communities and services. The structure of Local Government is noted as the structure closest to the people and is the local implementation arm of Government departmental aims. The Minister and department have strongly highlighted the importance of partnership working. However historically some services may appear to have approached partnership working with an ethos of working with other organisations for support to roll out their work, this creates a decrease in additionality and an increase in duplication. Working together is not fully effective if it only creates a flow of, more of the same, it then becomes a further example of how, "current system controls and constraints rather than supporting and enabling innovation". Valuable and purposeful partnership working adopts a serious mechanism of co production where organisations have the strategic flexibility to work together and be led by innovation.
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	If there are a number of partners they should be bringing their own identity to the process and looking at how, what they do, can compliment and support an overall strategy to address health, not imitating what is already happening. Partnerships across sectors are not necessary to create more of the same. Government departments and statutory organisations are moving into a time when top tiers should always have meaningful cross sector representation. Future solutions look to shared resources, creative strategies and specific spending. Cross sector representation widens the scope of action plans and commissioning plans to address cycles of health inequalities which are creating current and future pressure on health service. For example, low educational outcomes do not begin at 16 when young people fail in exams they are often the result of years of endurance within an educational system not equipped to meet the needs of a child outside mainstream teaching methods. Early years is a robust mechanism of services which could hold the key to tier one interventions, early years now sits within the Department of Education. How closely is this interlined with the Department of Health. Are the common themes scrutinised? More importantly are budgets combined to address combined issues? For example, would population screening for ASD for all pupils see a reduction in adult related health problems if looked at over a 25 year life span. Who would be responsible for funding this? Education? Health ? Local Government is in a position to hear the direct problems
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	being raised within communities and implement a dual approach to the Departments of Education and Health as Local Government is a body that underpins all departments. Yet Local Government is not currently involved in developing commissioning plans. Smaller localised administrative committees with cross sectoral representation and dual knowledge of service delivery and community needs directly linked to the Department of Health and other departments would be more efficient, accountable and flexible than a regional board. However this should not sit solely within the remit of the regional trusts but with an umbrella structure of local government. This affords the structure built in links and relationships for planning and commissioning and also allows Health and Social Care to benefit from shared resources in terms of administration. It would also be centrally placed within holistic whole area planning which can draw down additional external funding for community based interventions and programmes. In a time of austerity the Health sector has an opportunity under the new Community Planning and Wellbeing mandate of Local Government to redirect necessary funding to frontline services. This would support citizen led and focussed mechanisms to address equity of life chances which will address cycles and promote cultural changes in making better choices for citizens. The benefits of which in the long term will impact directly on services.
More	Q 2. Do you share the Minister's view that the system needs to

Responsive to Innovation	be better at enabling and supporting innovation? The Council would support the Minister's view and suggest that the health of our population should be addressed collaboratively. Addressing health should involve Local Government and other partners reflecting current evidence demonstrating that our health is a product of our healthy relationships and quality of life. Dr Margaret Hannah, in her publication "Humanising Healthcare" suggests the current underlying beliefs underpinning the health structure, see the body as a machine and medicine as ' an episodic service of fix and repair'. While this has been somewhat successful it is dependent on ongoing improvement in medical technology. She also suggests that "patients being treated today in hospital are older than they were a generation ago and more in need of care than a cure". She emphasises that the healthcare system is "confronted with a rise in conditions that are more obviously the result of complex social factors rather than simply the physiology of the individual" and is not equipped to deal with these changes in society. Essentially it has been a model that controls and constrains, rather than one that supports an 'exceptionally talented' and committed group of professionals to achieve the best possible outcomes for the people of Northern Ireland. To implement meaningful change professionals across sectors and all government departments must be prepared to recognise the business of health as 'everyone's business'. The Minister has set out the need to shift the balance between leadership and management. The vehicles and structures of
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management are already established within local government structures. The flexibility of a citizen led organisation close to the ground and linked to operational outcomes and demands as well as being strategically positioned has the required environment to nurture, support and promote leadership through the change that is necessary. People and communities are as well placed to be part of the solution process as any and all statutory agencies.

Innovation is often met with the wall of tiered bureaucracy. Decisions cannot be taken or existing decisions cannot be changed, 'exceptionally talented' groups of professionals, have the focussed priority of achieving a set of outcomes detailed in an action plan or commissioning document rather than the priority of working to achieve the best possible outcomes for people.

Innovative front line interventions and services rise up from community need and experience and have to fight for health service support because they are not yet recognised in a plan or strategy, that may well be out of date shortly after publication.

The Minister needs to weigh up the classification of health need and support from an external perspective outside of the Health Services.

The Health Service budget is not consistent with a flexible cross sector approach to delivery. If an issue is identified as impacting on health, but sits outside the remit of the Health department, how fluid and accommodating is the process to develop a response to that issue?

For example, the Department of Education addressing bullying or the Equality Department addressing social isolation, or the Department of Justice enforcing scrutiny of all forms of childhood abuse.

There is evidence suggesting that there are stronger links between

	childhood trauma and addiction than there is between obesity and diabetes type II. If the Health Service is to operate in a way that better enables and supports innovation it needs to be a service that works without boundaries with clear structures and invites and values information, evidence and the voice of experts and expertise outside of the service. The service has focussed on ensuring everyone has equal access to treatment, but perhaps the wider focus has been sidelined. Everyone should have equity across their life opportunity to live happier and healthier lives. One department cannot achieve the impact necessary across all determinants. Addressing health needs leadership and vision and must be able to nurture leadership and vision from the footpaths of local streets to the floors of Stormont. The service needs to be flexible and able to respond to emerging trends. Bureaucracy replaced with mechanisms and systems of partnerships that can react and implement solutions at the time of need. Partnership approaches should not prioritise a series of meetings and tiered reporting mechanisms against a single department plan. Partnership working should mean the mainstreaming of a vision for Northern Ireland with evidenced solutions implemented to address recurring themes and create robust 25 year plans.
	Q3. Would reduced bureaucracy in terms of HSC Structures allow the system to respond more quickly to changing demands? The Health Service would greatly benefit from reduced bureaucracy but the structures need to be established challenged and tested. The

current culture affords itself to the model that accountability goes upwards through management to boards and to the department.

If the Health Service is to put in place a system that allows it and encourages it to respond more quickly to changing demands then accountability must flow both ways, to citizens, and to the department.

The Health Service has resourced projects and programmes to facilitate this flow such as the, Patient Client Council and , '10,000 voices'. These platforms and mechanisms exist within local government and a merging of structures would more greatly impact upon 'a greater stake hold involvement in the planning and design of services'. Local Government is an arena within which, 'the clinical and professional expertise, members of the public and service users, and the community and voluntary sector, have a voice which is heard and is valued.

The new Local Government Mandate for Community Planning will develop mechanisms for issues to be brought to Health Services, however this is an opportunity of this time of change and transformation for Health Services to become central to that mandate, not just by attending meetings and agreeing actions but by shared planning, joint working to obtain resources and working together as equal partners to develop a commissioning plan under the existing structures in each electoral area. The structures exist, the expertise and experience exists and this type of focussed streamlined approach would offer flexibility within the system to identify and respond to issues, new tends, emerging issues and locality specific problems, timely and with immediate recognition.

The Health Professionals are the clinical experts now is the time to move forward with Health in a meaningful, holistic partnership

	recognising the expertise in local government for community engagement, civic leadership, economic prosperity and skills to explore additional resourcing through external and transnational funding. Under the new Community Planning mandate the opportunity for new ways to address old issues with community leadership and innovative practice is an excellent opportunity at a time of restructuring within the Health services to be brave about change.
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	Q4. Will bringing performance management into the Department help improve lines of accountability?
Accountability and Performance Management	A growing wellbeing debate has begun to address the blind spot in our system of governance and economics. Wellbeing is recognised as a useful concept to measure. This matters because it is increasingly important to go beyond monetary measures, such as Gross Domestic Product, in measuring the progress of societies. Ultimately it is wellbeing that is the focus of policy. People's subjective perceptions, evaluations and experiences are a crucial component of wellbeing. It can appear that what we currently deliver and work to produce is intervention at the point of crisis. To leave a legacy we have to build capacity within communities. We have to understand communities and use better indicators to locate and address the issues to effect long term change. Public performance management has enabled organisations to meet targets even when outcomes for citizens have not improved. There

is some argument that public services have become adept at, 'gaming,' altering the figures to meet the target but ultimately missing the point.

Setting the wrong measurement or using measurements as targets, has been proven to actually undermine the capability of an organization and reduce standards rather than the reverse (Seddon 1992).

The new responsibilities of Local Government and leadership in community planning should underpin and deepen a culture of partnership and accountability and a citizen based approach to policy design and delivery with an outcome focus. N Ireland has been transformed in the last two decades however we have deeply intrinsic social, economic and cultural issues that have allowed poverty and inequality to become epidemic.

For example in N Ireland when searching for sustainable solutions to the street protests in Belfast the Chief Constable of the PSNI spoke about suicide, health inequalities and low educational outcomes.

Subjective wellbeing refers to how people experience the quality of their lives and includes both emotional reactions and cognitive judgements. Psychologists have defined happiness as a combination of life satisfaction and the relevant frequency of positive and negative effect. Positive psychology is particularly concerned with the study of SWB (Subjective Well being).

Wellbeing and associated concepts such as flourishing have moved centre stage.

The Minister therefore should consider not just how performance should be monitored and measured, but more what, within

	performance and outcomes should be monitored and measured and how can this be effectively managed. High level indicators do exist, indicators that recognise the influence of the wider socioeconomic determinates of health. However a number of these indicators derive from the strategies of departments other than health.
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	Q5. The Donaldson report and the Department’s review of commissioning both concluded that a full, competitive commissioning process is too complex and transactional for an area as small as Northern Ireland. Do you agree?
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Commissioning and Planning	Yes,the Council strongly agrees that a full competitive commissioning process is too complex for a population of 1.8 million. The current competitive commissioning process impacts negatively on effective partnership working. To successfully create healthy vibrant communities and equity for all people a system of support, flourishing and consistent forward movement should be developed. The current competitive process creates stops and starts impacting effective delivery of innovative solutions and does not lend itself to long term work. The consultation document outlines that this process will be undertaken to reflect the aspiration of local communities and their representatives. The Community planning process is the means whereby this can be achieved. The consultation document notes that the Public Health Agency is "responsible for improving and protecting the health and social wellbeing of, and reducing health inequalities between, people in Northern Ireland. As Sir Harry Burns suggested and as outlined in the introduction to this response, this cannot be achieved by the PHA alone as addressing health inequalities involves improving opportunities in education, housing, jobs, the environment we live in and much more. Action in these areas is undertaken by other agencies and services outside the remit of the health service. Therefore, addressing health inequalities must be a multi agency, multi faceted approach.
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	Q6. Do you agree that trusts are best placed to assess local needs and should therefore have a greater level of responsibility and autonomy for planning services in their
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	area?
New Structures	The new responsibilities of Local Government and leadership in Community Planning must be considered in association with the locality advantages of local Trusts. Community Planning should underpin and deepen a culture of partnership and accountability and a citizen based approach to policy design and delivery with an outcome focus. Community Planning presents the perfect conditions for the joint working arrangements between health Services and Local Government.

	Q7. Do you agree that these are the right structural changes to make to streamline and simplify the Health and Social Care System?
	While the proposed changes somewhat reduce the bureaucracy, there remain a number of accountability strands. The restructure could hardly be described as steam-lining or simplifying the Health and Social Care system. Structural changes are welcomed, however we have outlined throughout this consultation the need for exploration of addressing the structures within the context of the new Community Planning mandate. This opportunity is paramount to this time in the political life of N

	Ireland and presents an important opportunity for change. 13 January 2016 Minister Hamilton stated, "The appointment of an expert panel chaired by Professor Rafael Bengoa to lead the debate on how we can deliver a world class health and social care system in Northern Ireland is another important step forward in the implementation of the radical and far reaching reform plans I outlined last November." The appointment of the panel is welcomed however the membership of the panel goes further to underpin the argument presented in this consultation response. With so many determinates that impact on health sitting outside the remit of the Health sector, is the membership of the panel fully reflective of the cross sector, inter-departmental approach need to really address health and wellbeing? With the need for wider partnership mainstreaming to address health inequalities being recognised, the panel membership should bring the breadth of lived experience, innovative new approaches and wide expertise to truly create a health and Social Care system that will be the, "world class health Service..that puts patient at the centre." Health cannot risk being interpreted as treatment at the time of illness or just equal access to services. Addressing values underpinning the health service are a priority. Joint planning to build healthy resilient communities and happy prosperous citizens is core to all health business. With the new mandate of Community Planning being central to reforms across our region, we would ask; is there a place for the voice, expertise and input from Local Government in the expert panel to
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	widen the debate and bring forward a multi-agency response to address the challenges of health?
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*Interim Restructuring
Outline Paper*

Education Library Service

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Outline Paper focuses on interim arrangements for the Education Library Service (ELS), which will replace the current Schools Library Services of the five former Education and Library Boards (ELBs).

1.2 The interim ELS will operate within the wider context of the Department of Education policy and priorities. It will seek to support school improvement within the context of the DE's 'Every School a Good School – a Policy for School Improvement' (2009) through the range of services provided. The ELS should be recognised as a key element of school support services in supporting literacy development and school improvement. It will aim specifically to foster a love of reading, to develop curiosity and to promote information literacy and lifelong learning through provision of high quality resources and professional advice and support to schools and other educational establishments.

1.3 The streamlined interim ELS will need to take account of the potential of new technology to improve quality of service and ensure the service meets the needs of 21st century users. Also, given the significant reduction in ELS staff resulting from voluntary severance, a range of work areas will be remodelled in respect of level of service delivery and support.

1.4 To this end, the following areas will be reviewed:

- Premises/locations - with a view to providing best value, including school access to staff and resources and the use of EA premises as far as possible;
- Procurement processes - to ensure economies of scale in relation to stock and furniture purchases would be reviewed and if necessary expanded to take account of changing formats and resources including eBooks and on-line resources;

- Advisory Service - to ensure the establishment of a proactive support network which reflects the needs of schools. This Service should support the literacy and school improvement work of other EA officers and reflect the information skills required in the Northern Ireland Curriculum;
- Partnerships – working with other agencies, including: Booktrust and Children’s Books Ireland to promote literacy and a love of reading; C2k/ Capita to provide high quality library management systems and to support on-line learning; QUB to develop information literacy skills and promote life-long learning. Also working alongside other EA officers including Extended schools and Libraries NI to develop a parental support programme;
- Topic Loan Service – cross curricular topic packs supplied directly to teachers to support the delivery of the Northern Ireland Curriculum. Providing a timely service which ensures value for money and reduces unnecessary duplication of resources;
- Online Resources - delivery and support of collaborative courses and eBooks to ensure equality of provision; and
- Mobile Library Service - to schools to ensure the service is viable and meets the best value requirements of schools.

1.5 Furthermore, the Audio Visual Service will be discontinued, with current staff being subsumed into the ELS interim structure.

1.6 This paper presents interim arrangements which will facilitate service delivery in anticipation of agreed enduring structures for the ELS. These interim arrangements reflect the remaining staffing cohort resulting from implementation of voluntary severance.

1.7 Role of Education Library Service

The Education Library Service supports the DE vision *'to enable each young person to achieve his/her potential'* and the aim of the Northern Ireland Curriculum *'to empower young people to achieve their potential and to make informed and responsible decisions throughout their lives'*. It also aims specifically to foster a love of reading, to develop curiosity and to promote information literacy and lifelong learning through provision of high quality resources and professional advice and support to schools and other educational establishments.

The Education Library Service provides:

1. Loan Services

- Books and other resources to encourage reading and support learning in the classroom. This service is provided through mobile library visits to schools and/or teachers visits to local centres.
- Cross curricular topic packs supplied directly to teachers to support the delivery of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, providing a timely service which ensures value for money and reduces unnecessary duplication of resources

2. Advice, Support and Services to Schools

- School Improvement
 - post-inspection work including schools in Formal Intervention process and other EA priority schools
 - information on all aspects of reading and children's literature
 - reading and literacy development programmes
 - advice in relation to library projects connected with the Extended Schools' Programme, including working with parents
- Library Development
 - ensuring school library provision meets approved guidelines/standards
 - specifications and schedules for library equipment, layout and design
 - organisation of library facilities in the school
- Information Literacy
 - supporting the implementation, development and use of ICT in the school library
 - encouraging the use of on-line learning as a tool to promote literacy and information management

- Training
 - providing training for school-based library staff and volunteer helpers and pupils
 - contributing to other in-service training, including BT/EPD training programme
- Procurement
 - supply of resources through a tender which ensures value for money and benefits services and individual schools
 - standardised electronic catalogue records ready for integration with the C2k/ Capita Library Management System
 - advice on selecting resources
- Outreach Services
 - reader development activities including author visits
 - facilitated sessions with parents/carers
 - support for summer scheme

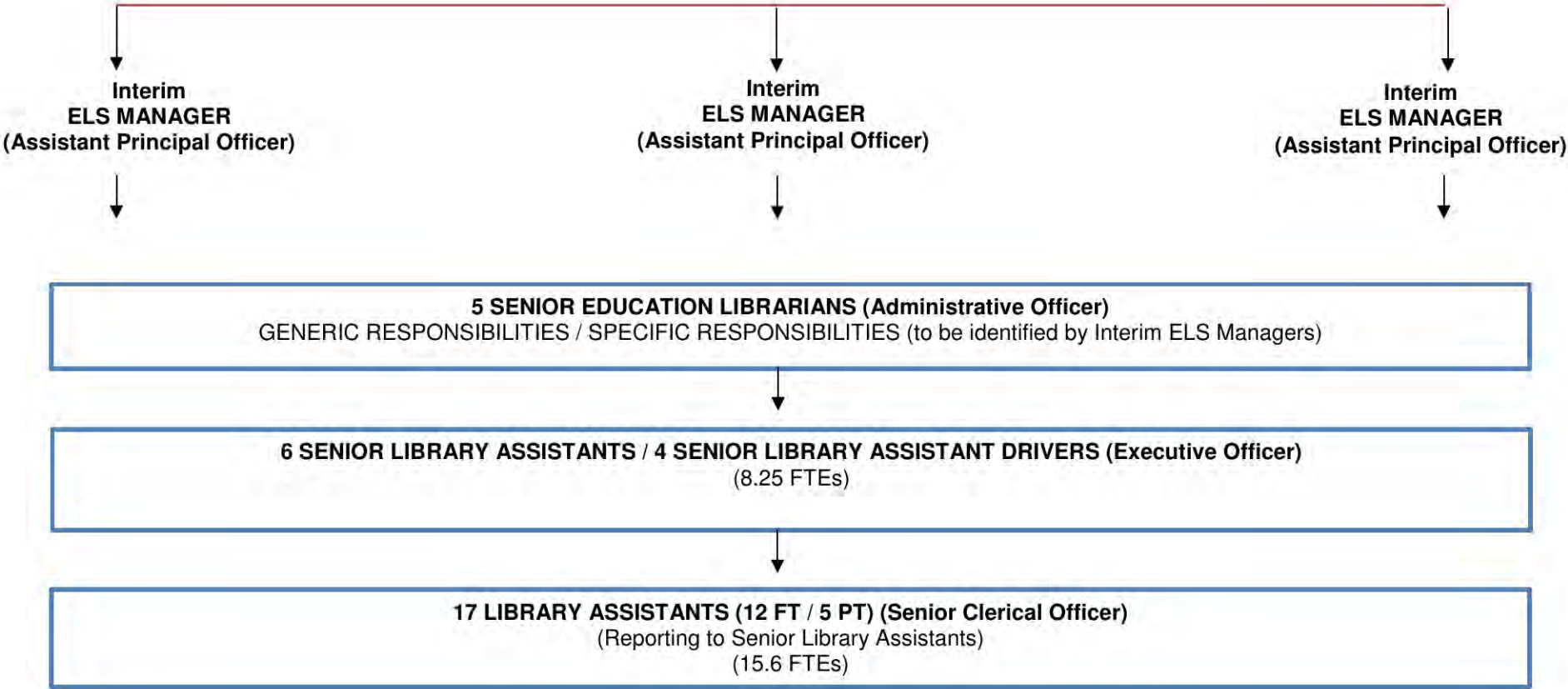
2 EDUCATION LIBRARY SERVICE PROPOSED INTERIM STRUCTURE

2.1 The proposed interim structure is predicated on the following principles:

- **No change** to existing work bases/location of staff;
- **Most effective deployment** of existing staff who remain in the service following Voluntary Severance;
- **Agreed** revisions to the existing remit of responsibility, as required on a post-holder to post-holder basis; and
- **Equity in the apportionment** of schools per Library Service Manager which provides for local presence and responsiveness to school issues.

2.2 In the context of interim re-structuring proposals for the entire ELS, it is determined that the most effective structure would be as follows:

EA Education Library Service - Proposed Interim Structure



2.3 The structure illustrates proposed interim line management responsibilities for ELS, which are dependent upon a number of interim arrangements being put in place. These are outlined below:

- Three Interim Education Library Service Managers (current Schools' Library Service Managers), responsible for the overall delivery of the ELS and management of staff across the EA area, reporting through to the Deputy Director School Improvement (current SEO)¹;
- Five Senior Education Librarians reporting to an Interim ELS Manager;
- Six Senior Library Assistants and four Senior Library Assistant Drivers (8.25 FTEs) reporting to Senior Education Librarians; and
- 17 Library Assistants (15.6 FTEs) reporting to Senior Library Assistants.

2.4 Interim ELS Managers will assume responsibility for: key ELS functions; a range of identified schools; and a number of staff.

2.5 The table below illustrates the proposed allocation of ELS functions and schools to Interim ELS Managers.

Interim ELS Manager	No. of Schools	Functional Responsibilities
Interim ELS Manager 1	387	Financial Management Staff Training and Development Mobile Service Reader Development
Interim ELS Manager 2	388	Financial Management Staff Training and Development New Technology, to include online resources

¹ A manager will be identified within the School Improvement Service to assume an oversight role for ELS.

		Purchasing and Procurement
Interim ELS Manager 3	390	Financial Management Staff Training and Development Information Literacy, to include online learning Topic Loan Service

2.6 The Interim ELS Structure represents a reduction in staffing from 57 (50.05 FTE) to 36 (31.85 FTE) posts.

3 REMIT OF ELS STAFF

3.1 The interim ELS will incorporate the following functions:

3.1.1 Advice, Support and Services to Schools, including:

- appropriate support, where required, to schools involved in post-inspection work, including schools in Formal Intervention process;
- supporting the implementation, development and use of ICT in the school library;
- Library projects connected with improving Literacy outcomes for children, the Extended Schools' Programme and working with parents; and
- appropriate support to establish and develop school libraries including design and furniture.

3.1.2 Training, including:

- provision of training for school-based library staff/teachers/volunteer/pupils and contribution as required to other in-service training, including BT/EPD programme.

3.1.3 Purchasing Service, including:

- value for money supply of catalogued resources through a regional tender which benefits services and individual schools; and
- computerised catalogue records.

3.1.4 Outreach Services, including:

- reader development activities including author visits, facilitated sessions with parents/carers and support for summer schemes; and
- information skills.

3.1.5 Loan Service, including:

- Exchange service to enable schools to replenish their resources by mobile visit to school or staff visit to local ELS base; and
- Topic Loan service including newly published material selected to meet the needs of individual teachers.

4 TRANSITION TO INTERIM ELS - RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The identified risks involved in transition to the new interim Education Library Service are outlined in the table below, along with actions as to how the identified risks will be reduced or mitigated.

RISKS TO TRANSITION TO INTERIM EDUCATION LIBRARY SERVICE					
Risk no.	Detail of Risk	Mitigating Action	Risk Owner	Risk Dashboard	
1	Loss of management and staff expertise within the Education Library Service.	The Education Library Service clearly identifies management and staff expertise requirements to deliver the new model.	Interim Director (current WR RMD)	Inherent Risk Score	20
				Residual Risk Score	10
2	Reduction in services to schools.	The Education Library Service clearly identifies a revised model of services to schools, which focuses on identification of clear priorities.	Interim Director (current WR RMD)	Inherent Risk Score	20
				Residual Risk Score	15
3	Unwillingness of staff to accept revised remits.	Revised roles and responsibilities identified for the Education Library Service will be negotiated and agreed with individual staff members.	Interim Director (current WR RMD)	Inherent Risk Score	20
				Residual Risk Score	8
4	Lack of strategic alignment with any broader regional restructuring.	Education Library Service is fully compatible with strategic proposals for revised models of service delivery and voluntary severance.	Interim Director (current WR RMD)	Inherent Risk Score	16
				Residual Risk Score	6
5	Increased travel time and costs associated with greater geographical spread.	The Education Library Service delivery model is designed to optimise accessibility of existing staff to schools, ensuring minimum travel time and	Interim Director (current WR RMD)	Inherent Risk Score	12

		change to existing work base. The Service will continue to promote the use of technology, including videoconferencing and desktop MS Lync for communicating across wider geographical areas.		Residual Risk Score	8
6	School expectations not aligning with the model of service delivery.	The new model of service delivery and the remit of staff is being clearly communicated to all schools across the EA Region, in advance of implementation of change.	Interim Director (current WR RMD)	Inherent Risk Score	20
				Residual Risk Score	9

Risk Matrix

			IMPACT				
			1	2	3	4	5
			MINOR	MODERATE	SIGNIFICANT	MAJOR	CRITICAL
LIKELIHOOD	1	UNLIKELY	1	2	3	4	5
	2	REMOTE	2	4	6	8	10
	3	POSSIBLE	3	6	9	12	15
	4	PROBABLE	4	8	12	16	20
	5	ALMOST CERTAIN	5	10	15	20	25

CATHAL Ó FLANNAGÁIN T.D.
AIRE GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA AGUS TRÁDÁLA
BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2

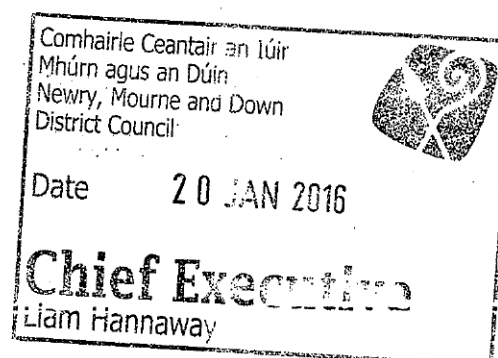


CHARLES FLANAGAN T.D.
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE
DUBLIN 2

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m/17

Mr. Liam Hannaway
Chief Executive
Newry Mourne and Down District Council
Newry Office
O'Hagan House
Monaghan Row
Newry BT35 8 DJ



11 January 2016

Our Ref: AI0150303

Dear Mr. Hannaway,

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr. Charles Flanagan T.D., has asked me to thank you for your letter concerning the proposal to construct a bridge at Narrow Water, Co. Down across Carlingford Lough to Co. Louth.

While the Minister is not in a position at this time to meet with a delegation from the Council to discuss the proposal he has asked me to assure you that the Government has indicated on several occasions, including at meetings of the North South Ministerial Council, that it remains committed to the concept of the Narrow Water Bridge. This commitment was also confirmed in the *Fresh Start* Agreement, in which the Government has agreed together with the Northern Ireland Executive to undertake a review of the Narrow Water Bridge project with a view to identifying options for its future development. The Narrow Water Bridge will be one of a range of issues to be considered by a group of senior officials from both jurisdictions which will be reporting to the North South Ministerial Council.

Yours sincerely,

Eimear Friel
Private Secretary

**From the office of the
Minister of the Environment**



Department of the
Environment

www.doeni.gov.uk

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Mr Liam Hannaway
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Your reference:
Our reference: COR/0016/2016

20 January 2016

Dear Mr Hannaway

Thank you for your letter dated 18 December 2015 regarding ring-fencing the Rates Support Grant (RSG) at the 2014/15 budget level of £18.325 million and suggesting a study to determine levels of future need within councils.

I am very much aware of the important support the RSG provides to less well off councils. This was why I pressed the Finance Minister and the Executive to have the RSG excluded from the across the board budget reductions imposed as a result of the 2015/16 budget. I felt this was particularly important as councils were, at that time, undergoing major changes associated with local government reform and reorganisation. However despite my efforts on this point this was not reflected in the Budget and initial allocations of the RSG were cut to a £15.5m opening budget.

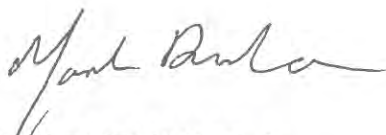
I kept the situation under review and as a result of close financial management and reprioritising within my department you will be aware that I was able to provide additional money of £2.1m to less well off councils through the RSG this year. I am keeping the position for this year under review and will seek to allocate more support to councils through the RSG if that is possible.

You will be aware that the Executive agreed a proposed Budget scenario for next year in December. Unfortunately this has again incorporated a proposed reduction in the baseline funding available for the RSG. I voted against this Budget scenario in the Executive but it was approved by a majority vote. I will continue to press for the level of RSG for next year to be protected in the final Budget due to be brought to the Assembly for approval later this month.

I note your suggestion that a study to determine the future needs of less well off councils should be carried out and that this review should be incorporated in the current non-domestic rate consultation exercise that is being carried out by DFP. I agree that such a study would be appropriate following the reorganisation of councils last year and I hope this will be taken forward by the new Department for Communities following the forthcoming Assembly elections. I believe such a study

will be best taken forward as a stand alone exercise, rather than being linked to the separate DFP non-domestic rate review exercise.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Durkan', written in a cursive style.

MARK H DURKAN MLA
Minister of the Environment