

## Draft for Consideration

### NILGA Strategic Plan 2008 - 2011

This draft outline plan details the vision and outcome statements developed at the NILGA Strategic Planning Days. It was developed with the assistance of Neal Willis from Newtownabbey Borough Council and Gerry Millar from Belfast City Council. It articulates the vision of the organisation and provides the foundation from which to develop more detailed annual plans, performance measures and a reporting framework to the councils.

#### Introduction

NILGA was established in 2001 to represent the interests of local government in Northern Ireland. The organisation has established itself over the last six years as the voice of local government and retains the support of all the councils and main political parties.

As the RPA moves into an implementation phase the Minister for the Environment confirmed that she wishes to work with NILGA as the strategic partner to modernise local government. The first phase of the funding package has now been agreed. This agreement to fund NILGA is based on significant background work undertaken by the Improvement and Development Agency in 2006.

This document describes our vision of the organisation in 2011 and sets out an ambitious three year strategic plan to achieve that vision. The plan will guide the work of the Association and provide a basis for communication, performance management and accountability. It will be reviewed and reported upon on an annual basis.

#### Objectives and Priorities

The purpose of NILGA is to support the development of local councils in line with the vision for local government. In summary the vision is to empower local councils to;

- Provide strong civic leadership
- Deliver modern public services
- Shape the places where people live and work

These three themes are underpinned by a set of principles which include; working in partnership with other councils, central government and social partners; taking a citizen

centred approach; continuous improvement; innovation; value for money and strong engagement with local communities.

In working towards the vision the NILGA key role is:

***“To be the voice of strong, democratic local government and the champion of improved services to citizens.”***

Our mission is;

***“To work with councils and other stakeholders to champion and support the development of a world class local government system in Northern Ireland which works in partnership with others to serve citizens”.***

The NILGA Strategic Plan is articulated against six strategic themes.

- 1. Building strong relationships**
- 2. Providing effective and innovative communication across the sector and with stakeholders**
- 3. Influencing government to support local government development**
- 4. Facilitating and leading local government modernisation**
- 5. Providing effective and efficient services to local government**
- 6. Providing effective internal management systems and procedures**

The NILGA shared values are detailed below. They are the basic tenets on which the organisation is founded. Members and staff are committed to working to ensure these values are at the heart of all the work we undertake.

- Impartiality
- Honesty & Integrity
- Equity & Diversity
- Value for Money
- Developing People
- Openness & Transparency
- Partnership and inclusivity
- Innovation
- Professionalism

This strategic plan is based on several critical assumptions. The assumptions are that NILGA will maintain buy-in from councils and political parties; there will be wider political stability; agreement on how to progress the RPA; and provision of continued resources. If any one of these conditions is not met then the plan will be revised accordingly.

## Strategic Theme 1

### **Building Strong Relationships**

The foundation of all NILGA work is strong and mutually beneficial relationships with councils; the quality of all other work is dependent on the participation and trust of member councils. Building on this foundation NILGA must develop and maintain a variety of relationships with stakeholders in order to gain intelligence, develop policy, build coalitions and influence others for the benefit of local government.

Our outcome statement for 2011 under this priority is:

**NILGA will be recognised by councils and other stakeholders as the authentic voice of local government. Councils will be confident that NILGA will represent the collective views of the sector and other stakeholders will regard NILGA as the first point of contact in relation to local government issues.**

NILGA has identified five outcomes statements to make the vision a reality:

- 1.1 NILGA will have full participation and support from all councils
- 1.2 NILGA will have strong effective relationships with local government officer groups
- 1.3 NILGA will have strong effective relationships with political parties
- 1.4 NILGA will have strong effective relationship other local government organisations
- 1.5 NILGA will have strong effective relationships with other stakeholders

## Strategic Theme 2

### **Provision of Effective and Innovative Communication Systems across Local Government and with Stakeholders**

As the representative body for local government a key role for the organisation is to provide world class communication systems within the sector and between the sector and other stakeholders. Recognising that excellent communication will be integral to all our work NILGA has established this as a strategic theme.

Our outcome statement for 2011 is:

**NILGA will be the acknowledged hub for local government communication in Northern Ireland. Any elected member, officer, potential employee or member of the press or public will be able to easily access any piece of information they require in a timely manner and in a way they require the information.**

NILGA has identified five outcomes which will support the organisation make the vision a reality:

- 2.1 NILGA will have a first class website, which is easily accessed and is regularly updated.
- 2.2 NILGA will produce a series of newsletters, e-zines and briefings which can be easily accessed by all our stakeholders
- 2.3 Local Government will have regular information and have developed a positive image in the local media
- 2.4 NILGA will have excellent two way communication mechanisms and protocols with and between Councils
- 2.5 NILGA will have established excellent internal communication systems within the organisation

## Strategic Theme 3

### **Developing Local Government Policy and Influencing Government**

The primary purpose of councils investing in NILGA is to provide an interface with government and influence government and other stakeholders to develop activities which best support councils in serving their citizens. It is therefore essential that Local Government has effective policy making procedures and that policy positions are clearly articulated and promoted.

Our outcome statement for 2011 for this strategic theme is:

**All Central government departments will develop policy in partnership with local government, as a matter of course, because local government as a sector has clear robust policy positions which are representative of member council views.**

To achieve this vision NILGA has identified four key outcomes:

**3.1** NILGA will have transparent policy development mechanism and a citizen centred approach to policy making

**3.2** NILGA will develop an influencing strategy to ensure resources and activities are focused on the key issues

**3.3** NILGA will identify and support elected members and officers to lead on a variety of key policy positions

**3.4** NILGA will seek to develop innovative and value for money mechanisms for developing an evidence-based approach to policy development.

## Strategic Theme 4

### **Supporting Local Government Modernisation**

NILGA has been identified as a lead partner with government in facilitating local government improvement. NILGA welcomes this role on behalf of councils and the recognition of the pressing need to modernise councils, achieve efficiencies and implement the Review of Public Administration decisions. To achieve this NILGA has been allocated resources by the department.

Our outcome statement for 2011 is:

**Councils will have worked with NILGA and central government to develop an agreed Improvement agenda which is fully supported and councils will be working individually and collaboratively to implement the priorities identified.**

To achieve this vision NILGA has identified five key outcomes:

**4.1** NILGA will have worked with stakeholders and suppliers to deliver an effective capacity building programme

**4.2** NILGA will have agreed an outline implementation plan for local government reorganisation and will provide support to councils and Transition Committees to facilitate the early phases of reorganisation

**4.3** There will be an agreed shared services strategy for local government and councils will have begun the implementation phase of this

**4.4** There will be an agreed information technology strategy for local government and councils will have begun implementation projects

**4.5** There will be a local government 'sharing best practice programme' supported by a local government awards scheme

## Strategic Theme 5

### **Providing effective and efficient services to local government**

As is the case in other regions and nations, a key role for NILGA is to provide services to councils that are best delivered on a regional basis.

Our outcome statement for 2011 for this priority is:

**NILGA is recognised as having delivered effective services for or on behalf of councils and is acknowledged as innovative, professional and recognised as adding significant value to councils.**

To achieve this vision NILGA has identified five key outcomes:

- 5.1** The NIJC will have supported the development of an HR strategy and developed effective negotiating positions with unions
- 5.2** NILGA will have developed a proactive and supportive approach to the development of delivery mechanisms to co-ordinate and support the delivery of the Waste Management Strategy
- 5.3** NILGA will have supported an effective EU engagement programme which empowers councils to have a voice in EU policy, funding programme development and monitoring
- 5.4** NILGA will have developed, in partnership with councils and Arts Council NI, a strategic approach to supporting the arts in local government
- 5.5** NILGA will develop a pro-active approach to accessing resources to support the development of local government

## Strategic Theme 6

### **Providing Effective Internal Systems and Procedures**

To ensure effective delivery of all the strategic themes NILGA must undertake all its business in an efficient and professional manner.

Our outcome statement for 2011 is:

**NILGA will be acknowledged by members as a professional well managed organisation and by staff as an excellent employer who is committed to developing and supporting staff.**

To achieve this vision NILGA has identified five key outcomes:

**6.1** NILGA will have effective financial management systems

**6.2** NILGA will have Investors in People status and an innovative approach to staff development

**6.3** NILGA will develop effective internal administration systems and protocols

**6.4** NILGA will develop a suite of policies to support best business practice and legal requirements

**6.5** NILGA will have developed a strategic development plan and identified resources for the 2011-2015 period