

# **REVIEW OF POLICY ON LOCATION OF PUBLIC SECTOR JOBS**

## **PUBLIC RESEARCH PAPER**

### **Purpose of paper**

1. This paper sets out the background to the Review of policy on the location of public sector jobs in Northern Ireland. It gives some information on:
  - the background to the Review;
  - a consultation paper on draft guiding principles;
  - the report of the Committee of Finance and Personnel on location;
  - the Review;
  - terms of reference;
  - membership of the Review;
  - timescales; and
  - the public research forums.

### **Background to the Review**

2. The Review of policy on the location of public sector jobs was established in December 2007 at the request of the Northern Ireland Executive. The Review originated in 2006 following initial announcements on the Review of Public Administration (RPA) when a cross-sectoral estates working group was formed to develop a framework against which well informed and soundly based decisions on location could be taken. This resulted in the publication of a set of draft guiding principles in January 2007 for public consultation.
3. The consultation attracted strong interest and one of the key themes to emerge was the issue of dispersal. Some people argued for a proactive policy of dispersing public sector jobs from the Belfast area. Others acknowledged that a well managed relocation policy could bring a more even spread of benefits of public sector employment opportunities across Northern Ireland. But it also emphasised the

critical relationship between the long-term success of Belfast and the success of Northern Ireland Plc. There was a general desire for greater clarity on policy and there was a proposal for a policy review to enable the Executive to come to an agreed approach on the scale and degree to which a proactive relocation policy should be applied in Northern Ireland.

4. The Committee for Finance and Personnel in its *First Report on Workplace 2010 and the Location of Public Sector Jobs* in July 2007 also called for the development of an affirmative policy for the dispersal of public sector jobs and a cross-cutting strategy on jobs location, covering the Northern Ireland Civil Service, local government and the wider public sector. Details of the Committee's report are available at <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/finance/2007mandate/workplace2010.htm>

## **Review**

5. Having considered the consultation responses and the Committee for Finance and Personnel's report, the Executive approved a two-pronged approach to the issue of location:
  - establishing a framework to provide a robust process for decision-making on the location of RPA-related bodies; and
  - undertaking a time-bound review of policy on the location of public sector jobs in Northern Ireland.

The framework was published on the RPA website in November 2007 and the independent Review was established in parallel.

## **Terms of Reference**

6. The Review has been asked to put forward a set of practical recommendations for the longer-term approach to the location of public sector jobs (including civil service jobs) in Northern Ireland and propose an agenda for action. In doing so it will:

- a) consider the current location and nature of public sector jobs and functions in Northern Ireland, including planned movements in the short term;
- b) consider current policies on the location of public sector jobs, including the framework for decision-making on the location of RPA-related bodies (published in November 2007);
- c) take into account the public sector reform agenda, including
  - the future context of the Northern Ireland Civil Service in light of the reforms underway to develop a modern civil service;
  - the practical outworking of the Review of Public Administration on the ground; and
  - changing patterns of service delivery, including increasing co-location, co-operation and integration of services and use of electronic delivery channels;
- d) consider the costs, benefits and lessons learned from previous dispersal exercises of public sector jobs within Northern Ireland;
- e) consider the potential longer term impacts, costs and benefits of dispersal in the Northern Ireland context, including the social and economic cases for dispersal, the implications for communities, how best to maximise the longer-term benefits of a dispersal policy and value for money considerations;
- f) consider the potential equality issues in relation to the location public sector jobs;
- g) consider the potential human resource issues in relation to the location of public sector jobs;
- h) consider the sustainable development and environmental issues in relation to the location of public sector jobs, including the road and public transport impacts;
- i) consider the organisational/operational impacts of decentralisation;

- j) take into account the Programme for Government and the Executive's plans and priorities, including considering how location policy could best be linked with other Executive priorities;
  - k) consider the lessons learned from decentralisation policies in other jurisdictions - Scotland, Wales, England and the Republic of Ireland and their respective implementation;
  - l) take into account the Regional Development Strategy
  - m) consider the availability of suitable office accommodation to which public sector jobs could be dispersed;
  - n) reflect best practice in relation to policy-making and implementation in relation to decentralisation of public sector jobs and functions; and
  - o) take proper account of existing legislative and regulatory regimes, including employment law and other relevant Government policy and strategic frameworks, including 'Lifetime Opportunities'.
7. Having considered the terms of reference, the Review has subsequently set an overriding aim which draws the various elements together in a way that enables the group to focus on a pragmatic way forward: **to recommend the distribution of public sector jobs that best enhances the sustainable economic and social development of Northern Ireland.**

### **Membership**

8. The Review is chaired by Professor George Bain and comprises six other members:
- David Dobbin
  - Brian Hanna
  - Feargal McCormack
  - Joan Ruddock

Janice Tracey

David Watkins

### **Timescale**

9. The review was established in December 2007 and is due to produce its report by the summer of 2008.

### **Public research**

10. The Chair of the Review is holding 12 events across Northern Ireland between 16 April and 9 May 2008. Details of the events are listed below. Anyone with an interest in the location of public sector jobs is welcome to attend. Interested parties are also invited to submit views in writing to [location.review@dfpni.gov.uk](mailto:location.review@dfpni.gov.uk) by 23 May 2008.

## PUBLIC MEETINGS: DATES AND VENUES

<b>WEDNESDAY 16 APRIL</b> <b>11.00am – 12.30pm</b> <b>Verbal Arts Centre</b> <b>LONDONDERRY</b>	<b>WEDNESDAY 16 APRIL</b> <b>3.00pm – 4.30pm</b> <b>Strabane Community Library</b> <b>STRABANE</b>
<b>FRIDAY 18 APRIL</b> <b>11.00am – 12.30pm</b> <b>Market Place Theatre and Arts Centre</b> <b>ARMAGH</b>	<b>FRIDAY 18 APRIL</b> <b>3.00pm – 4.30pm</b> <b>Sean Hollywood Arts Centre</b> <b>NEWRY</b>
<b>MONDAY 21 APRIL</b> <b>11.00am – 12.30pm</b> <b>The Braid</b> <b>Ballymena Town Hall, Museum and Arts</b> <b>Centre</b> <b>BALLYMENA</b>	<b>MONDAY 21 APRIL</b> <b>3.00pm – 4.30pm</b> <b>Coleraine Leisure Centre</b> <b>COLERAINE</b>
<b>MONDAY 28 APRIL</b> <b>11.00am – 12.30pm</b> <b>Spires Conference Centre</b> <b>BELFAST</b>	
<b>FRIDAY 2 MAY</b> <b>11.00am – 12.30pm</b> <b>Council Offices</b> <b>DUNGANNON</b>	<b>FRIDAY 2 MAY</b> <b>3.00pm – 4.30pm</b> <b>Burnavon Arts and Cultural Centre</b> <b>COOKSTOWN</b>
<b>THURSDAY 8 MAY</b> <b>11.00am – 12.30pm</b> <b>Down Arts Centre</b> <b>DOWNPATRICK</b>	
<b>FRIDAY 9 MAY</b> <b>10.30am – 12.00pm</b> <b>Omagh Community House</b> <b>OMAGH</b>	<b>FRIDAY 9 MAY</b> <b>3.00am – 4.30pm</b> <b>The Clinton Centre</b> <b>ENNISKILLEN</b>