

DRAFT

**Northern Ireland
Local Government Association
(NILGA)**

**Scoping Exercise of the Future Leadership
Requirements for NILGA**



"Large enough to cope, small enough to care"

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1. Executive Summary

In relation to the organisation NILGA should:

- Review its constitution and its governance arrangements and include protocols to govern relationships with political parties, Councils and advisers;
- Seek to negotiate a formal understanding with the Executive to govern relationships between the Northern Ireland Assembly and NILGA;
- Look to additional funding opportunities recognising the weakness of the current position;
- Devise (in consultation with Councils) a new work plan which is relevant to the current issues and challenges for local government and which is performance driven; and
- Take a range of steps to ensure that the work of NILGA is valued by member Councils.

In relation to the post of Chief Executive NILGA should

- Agree a new job description and person specification;
- Set a salary specifically for this post ;
- Ensure that there is a robust system of performance appraisal in place so that the postholder is held to account by the members of NILGA;
- Allow incremental progression only upon the postholder achieving satisfactory performance; and
- Ensure that the new Chief Executive is appointed through a rigorous selection process with key stakeholders acting as advisers.

2. Our Brief

2.1 Our brief was to conduct a scoping exercise of the future leadership requirements in the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA). In carrying out this work a number of tasks and outputs were prescribed, including:

- a) To conduct stakeholder analysis to identify the key issues, concerns, challenges and drivers facing NILGA, which impact upon the future direction of the organisation and the sector within which the new role of Chief Executive will exist.
- b) To review information, including the examination of the IDEA report which established NILGA's current structure with a view to determining if it is still 'fit for purpose' in the current climate, and undertake research to inform the future role.
- c) To benchmark the future direction of local government in Northern Ireland against the future direction of comparable local government associations.
- d) To advise on a job evaluated pay grade for this future role.
- e) To benchmark comparative Chief Executive/leadership roles in local government.
- f) To translate the future role of Chief Executive into a written job description, with an employee specification (which clearly outlines the essential and desirable job related criteria in terms of qualifications and experience) and define associated skill sets / competencies that the post-holder must possess in order to be successful in the role.

2.2 The remainder of this report sets out how we approached the task that we had been set, our analysis of the issues, our findings and the conclusions we have reached.

3. Methodology

3.1 This report has been prepared following a comprehensive review of background documentation, a series of interviews and meetings with key stakeholders and through an on-line questionnaire. The work was undertaken by three of our lead associates:

Andrew Boatswain - a Director of AS Associates and former local authority chief executive;

Graham Essex-Crosby – an Associate Consultant and former local authority chief executive; and

Susan Osborne – a Director of AS Associates.

3.2 All the team have extensive experience of working across the United Kingdom including numerous assignments in Northern Ireland for both councils and other public sector organisations.

3.3 The team was onsite in Northern Ireland during the period 21 to 24 June 2010 and made a visit to Wales in July and then to Northern Ireland again and to Scotland in August. The team reviewed the extensive portfolio of documentation provided by NILGA. During our visits to Northern Ireland the team met with a range of groups and individuals including meetings with NILGA office bearers, council chief executives, civil servants, NILGA staff, political parties and representatives from other public service organisations.

3.4 The team would like to thank everybody that they met during the process for their time and contributions. The announcement of the postponement of the Review of Public Administration (RPA) in the week prior to the team's first visit brought considerable uncertainty not least to NILGA, its office bearers, members and staff. It is to their credit that amongst such uncertainty they found the time to discuss the future of the organisation and its leadership.

3.5 The interviews, meetings and on-line questionnaire were structured in response to the brief given to us and critically covered the issues and concerns facing local government in Northern Ireland and the issues and challenges for NILGA within the local government sector. Against this informed background, the team were able to probe how those dynamics would potentially impact upon the future role of NILGA's Chief Executive and on the skills and requirements for the post holder.

3.6 In addition to the work in Northern Ireland, the team met with representatives from the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA).

4. Analysis of the issues and some conclusions

4.1 General points about the scope of the post.

The points which are set out below provide the context for the post of the Chief Executive of NILGA. In particular we have analysed the comments we have received from the people we have consulted with, applied our understanding of what happens in other local authority associations and taken into account our own knowledge of local government in Northern Ireland and elsewhere.

Our brief was extensive but, of course, the main outcome we are concerned with is directly connected to the role of Chief Executive, the appropriate skills required to undertake the post successfully, the salary level and other matters connected to the appointment. The following general points and conclusions are, we suggest, important areas for NILGA to consider and may well form many of the tasks which the new Chief Executive should undertake once appointed. We have not included further recommendations relating to these issues but we do hope that NILGA will consider the points we have raised and make changes where required.

4.1.1 Everyone we consulted recognised the value or the potential value of NILGA mainly because of its ability to speak for local government in Northern Ireland. This includes the representatives we met from Newtownabbey Borough Council who were conscious of the potential for NILGA to work on behalf of all 26 Councils. This recognition is really important and provides a firm base for future activities.

4.1.2 Several people made the point that it is impossible for NILGA to speak for all Councils on everything. This will sometimes be the case and where that is so the organisation needs to recognise that there may be more than one view and there is a need to reflect these differing views in any responses to government. Councils need to feel that their views are understood and acted upon.

4.1.3 We learned that Government and the Executive in Northern Ireland recognise the value of NILGA but will probably not continue the current level of funding. Despite this, there is a strong case for Assembly funding, especially for the local government Improvement Agenda. One of the acknowledged weaknesses of the WLGA is the heavy dependence on funding from the Welsh Assembly. There is no move to reorganise local government in Wales but there the Assembly recognises the value of the WLGA contributions to the Improvement Agenda. COSLA receives little or no funding from the Scottish Parliament and is mainly reliant on income from subscriptions.

4.1.4 We understand that the current level of funding for NILGA from the Assembly owes much to the need to prepare for the reform of local government and the work of the policy development panels. The uncertainties around reform and the fact that the work of the panels is largely complete means that the funding is unlikely to be maintained at current levels. Whether this proves to be the case or not, such a heavy reliance on Assembly funding makes the organisation vulnerable to sudden shifts in policy at both National and Regional levels. The importance of the Improvement Agenda could have real potential in Northern Ireland where financial constraints have

yet to make a significant impact and where only a few Councils have made demonstrable progress in delivering sustainable improvements.

4.1.5 A number of people stressed the importance of securing additional funding. We agree that this is important but we suggest that it will not be easy. Whilst several ways to secure additional funding need to be explored, setting up NILGA to provide services directly to local government would not meet current needs and, in our view, would meet resistance. There should be a co-ordinating, brokering and commissioning role here for NILGA (especially in relation to collaboration) but this is unlikely to significantly help funding. The joint arrangements in place for Waste Management are a good example of what can be achieved through collaboration.

4.1.6 We are aware of the importance attached to the provision of shared services. The opportunities here are huge and cooperation between NILGA and SOLACE represents a real opportunity for local government in Northern Ireland. The need for efficiency savings makes this a priority. Some joint work is already underway and should form the basis of additional collaboration.

4.1.7 NILGA has tried hard to engage with Councils and this work needs to continue although we were told from a number of sources that there has only been limited success so far. It is important that NILGA continues to build effective relationships with its member Councils. Visiting each of the member Councils on an annual basis is fine but there is a sense in which this can become a “tick box” exercise. The range of individual meetings between NILGA and each Council needs to be supported by other initiatives. The range of methods of communication is also to be applauded but is not always valued by Councillors. More of a menu approach is worth considering so that Councillors can choose what they access. We also think that consideration needs to be given to how information is prioritised so that Councillors and Councils can recognise more readily what information is especially important to them.

4.1.8 Whilst attempts have been made by NILGA to engage with SOLACE (a major player on the local government scene in Northern Ireland) these have not been wholly successful. NILGA’s relationship with SOLACE needs to be revisited and strengthened. SOLACE represents an important resource for NILGA offering both general and specialist advice. SOLACE members are acutely aware of their role within the Councils they serve as advisers to elected members and the relationship with NILGA members is no different. There are some examples where this works well in practice but our research has indicated that the Advisory Group referred to in the NILGA Constitution has not functioned effectively. To ensure that the relationship between NILGA and SOLACE is understood by all we suggest that steps be taken to recognise the importance of the relationship and, where necessary, arrangements are placed on a more formal basis. Firstly there should be a protocol established between NILGA and SOLACE to explain the relationship and govern interactions. This should take proper account of the relationships between elected members and officers. Secondly, the knowledge and skills of SOLACE members needs to be used much more effectively to provide advice to NILGA. Thirdly, a regular officer meeting between SOLACE, NILGA and the civil service could provide a useful forum which would support NILGA members (and the Executive) in their dealings at strategic level.

4.1.9 NILGA has been most successful in building relationships with the political parties in Northern Ireland. It now needs to concentrate on building equally good relationships with Councils. The political structure in Northern Ireland does not make this easy. In all other parts of the UK the concept of Council Leaders makes it much easier for the Local Authority Associations to identify key Councillors and engage with them. In both Wales and Scotland the role of Council Leaders within the Association is crucial to their success. It also establishes the credibility of those Associations. We understand the importance of the concept of inclusion in Northern Ireland but we believe that the current arrangements hinder the Office Bearers because the Councillors on the NILGA Council may not represent the political leadership within the Council that appoints them. Unless and until this is addressed it will always be an uphill battle for Office Bearers to be sure that key Councillors sign up to NILGA views and decisions. Whilst we are sure that there are some informal mechanisms in place to address this, we think that much further thought needs to be given to this issue if NILGA is to truly represent local government in the Province.

4.1.10 A key relationship is that between Government and NILGA. It would be useful to develop a memorandum of understanding between NILGA and the Assembly similar to the understanding in Wales between the Welsh Assembly and WLGA. COSLA has a "Concordat" with the Scottish Parliament and the key principle is about working for what is best for Scotland. It is likely that the DOE would welcome something similar in Northern Ireland. Such an understanding needs to be supported by appropriate mechanisms for dialogue and debate. It is especially important that mechanisms are in place to enable NILGA spokespersons to engage directly with the appropriate Ministers. Again, the constitution needs to recognise the importance of this relationship.

4.1.11 There will be an important continuing role in relation to local government reform for some time to come. This is an opportunity for NILGA. We have already referred to the difficulties around the funding issues. The Transition Committees and the Policy Development Panels have already undertaken significant work and NILGA could have a role in taking this further forward and in initiating changes in the absence of formal legislation. The creation of a community planning framework across the Province, looking at groups of Councils (not necessarily in the shape of the eleven Councils previously proposed) could be a really important area of work requiring collaboration with the Assembly, the Health Service, Education, Police and others. This work needs to be undertaken principally by the Councils themselves (working in collaboration) but NILGA could have a major supporting role in this providing guidance and securing specialist help and advice. NILGA needs to be able to point to best practice and to co-ordinate activities amongst the 26 Councils.

4.1.12 The Improvement Agenda is another area where NILGA could have an important and continuing role to provide support to member Councils. Disseminating best practice, securing collaboration and the investigation of opportunities are all areas where NILGA can play an important part but this is only likely to be valued by Councils if they commission the work and direct its focus.

4.1.13 An area where NILGA should step in and make an impact is in training and development for Councillors. We are aware that this is under consideration at present and that the Local Government Training Group has put forward some

suggestions. If there is a key principle here it is that member development proposals need to be devised and controlled by Councillors. It would nevertheless be sensible to tap into existing expertise within the Local Government Training Group (such as in commissioning work). In any case there will be opportunities for working jointly with the LGTG as some training and development activities will be beneficial to officers and councillors alike. This is a major opportunity in terms of generating additional income. WLGA has a charter scheme which recognises excellence amongst member Councils in this area of training and development and we think that this is an initiative NILGA should pursue. Similar schemes also operate in England. The English Local Government Association has developed a skills framework for Councillors.

4.1.14 The level of subscriptions by member authorities is, in nearly all instances, not high but it is essential for NILGA to demonstrate value for money. In the current economic climate there will be increased pressure on NILGA from constituent Councils. The current work plan is not a particularly helpful or meaningful document. It needs to be revisited (and consulted upon) and in particular, a new work plan should clearly set out objectives, actions and performance goals so that Councils are involved in the plan and can recognise what they are getting for their subscription. Proposed outcomes must be clearly spelt out.

4.1.15 The constitution of NILGA needs to be revisited. This is not necessarily to change anything within the existing constitution (depending upon consultation) but to add two important elements. The first of these is to clarify the governance arrangements since these are not clear. For instance it is not clear if the Office Bearers have any decision making functions. The second is to set out with clarity a protocol to govern the arrangements for working with SOLACE and other advisers. We were surprised to find that the only protocol governing relationships between elected members and officers is a DOE publication (Code of Conduct for Councillors dated March 2003) which has a rather superficial section on relationships of Councillors to Employees. Individual Council Constitutions are not a feature of local government in Northern Ireland. In other parts of the UK all Councils have these and there are many examples available which include useful protocols governing the relationships between elected members and officers.

4.1.16 Future funding arrangements are uncertain but the likelihood is that a significant amount of DOE funding will be withdrawn. Clearly the current staffing structure will have to be revisited. NILGA will not be able to return to a “stable” position because it needs to adapt to the changing local government environment. It will be necessary to undertake a review of the staffing structure once the new Chief Executive is in place.

4.2 In relation to the post of Chief Executive we have reached the following conclusions.

4.2.1 The direct link of the salary for the post to the salary of local authority chief executives is illogical since there is little or no comparison between the two jobs in terms of their content. This link hinders the relationship between the Chief Executive of NILGA and local authority Chief Executives. We have discounted any comparison with the salaries of the Chief Executives of other Local Authority Associations because of differences in local government functions and scale elsewhere in the UK.

4.2.2. Previously the post was purportedly graded according to a job evaluation exercise using the Hay methodology. Hay is a proprietary job evaluation scheme produced by *The Hay Group*. It is widely used by organisations, in both the public and private sectors. The Hay methodology is an analytical, factor-based scheme, which aims to measure the relative size of jobs within an organisation. However the range of jobs within NILGA is too small for this to be useful. For this reason and because the job is not comparable to other jobs in the public sector, job evaluation is not helpful – in fact it is a hindrance.

4.2.3 A link to civil service grades might at first sight offer a more appropriate comparison since the post is mainly concerned with policy issues rather than executive management issues but in our view this is still a flawed comparison.

4.2.4 Alternatively, NILGA can devise a salary scale for the post which reflects the importance of the role and the realities of the jobs market without specific reference to other salary scales. On balance we prefer this option.

4.2.5 Our experience also tells us that attracting candidates from outside Northern Ireland is unlikely (but not impossible) unless they already have a strong connection to the Province.

4.2.6 The salary needs to be at a sufficient level to recognise the importance of the role, the skills needed and the realities of the jobs market. This latter element is probably the most important. There is of course, a question as to what exactly the salary range should be and our suggestion is based on our knowledge of the public sector jobs market in Northern Ireland rather than any exact science. But that is no different to the previous position where the “science” of job evaluation was based on a false premise.

4.2.7 The overriding personal qualities required in the postholder are:

- the ability to build and sustain personal relationships with a wide variety of interested bodies and individuals (the stakeholders) creating an atmosphere of trust;
- communication skills (especially the ability to influence and persuade); and
- an understanding of how the public sector works.

It is essential that the postholder works effectively with Councillors, sensitive to their roles and the context of their work in Northern Ireland.

4.2.8 Whilst an interim appointment has some attraction given the current uncertainties in relation to reform, any dilution of the post will send a negative message to others. For the same reason a part-time appointment would have a negative effect. It is important that NILGA demonstrates the determination of the organisation to make an impact and only a full time appointment will do this.

4.2.9 Direct local government management experience would be useful but should not be an absolute requirement for the post. It has been suggested to us that someone with both local and central government experience would be ideal – whilst we do not disagree, previous experience in any specific field should not be a

prerequisite for the job. However, the post holder should have the ability to develop credibility with all interested bodies (the stakeholders) and be able to demonstrate those skills appropriate to a 'lobbying' organisation.

4.2.10 We believe that there is merit in offering the post on a fixed term contract for four or five years always provided that there is satisfactory performance during that period. Whilst it should be possible for NILGA to end the appointment in the event of unsatisfactory performance, equally there should also be an opportunity to extend the original contract by mutual agreement.

4.2.11 The salary scale should provide for annual incremental progression based on performance. We suggest a starting salary of £76,000 with four annual performance related increments of £2,000 which would mean a maximum salary of £84,000. In addition the post should attract a cost of living increase in line with inflation as and when these are restored in the public sector.

4.2.12 Performance needs to be assessed each year by reference to previously agreed performance indicators whereby the organisation spells out its expectations for the role and the measures by which performance will be assessed. Whilst these issues should be decided by NILGA, perhaps in the form of a Remuneration Committee, other stakeholders should be consulted and in particular SOLACE should provide advisers in relation to both the performance indicators and their measurement. Satisfactory performance will result in payment of an increment whereas unsatisfactory performance will mean that an increment is withheld and may lead to the contract being terminated. We think that it would be helpful to appoint an independent facilitator for this appraisal process whose job it would be to take responsibility for the process. The process also needs to be supported by giving appropriate training to those involved.

4.2.13 We have devised a draft job description and person specification for approval by NILGA. This is attached. We were unsure of the necessity for NILGA (and therefore this post) to have responsibility for the Employer functions of the NIJC and JNC but recognise that this does not fit logically elsewhere. The arrangement in Northern Ireland mirrors that in Scotland and Wales. However, there is room to reconsider how this part of the organisation functions as part of the staffing review referred to above.

4.2.14 We suggest that NILGA form a panel with authority to make the appointment and deal with all matters relating to it. This panel could quite properly comprise the Office Bearers. Additionally SOLACE should be asked to appoint three advisers to the panel one of whom should be a human resource specialist. The selection process needs to be thorough and robust.

5. Summary of recommendations in relation to the post of Chief Executive

5.1. Job Description and Person Specification

We attach a job description and person specification for consideration (Appendix 1). These are formal documents and we want to see them expanded and enhanced so that they give a fuller picture through an additional section we have entitled **Job Context**. This is intended to convey some of the challenges which make the job interesting and attractive. We recommend that these documents should be approved as the basis for the selection process.

5.2 Terms and Conditions

We recommend that the appointment should be for a fixed term of four or five years with the ability to terminate the contract for unsatisfactory performance and the ability to extend the contract by mutual agreement. Other terms and conditions (e.g. travel and subsistence allowances, leave entitlement, sick pay entitlement, pension provision) should be in line with other NILGA staff.

5.3 Salary

We recommend that the salary be fixed by reference to the jobs market for a senior post in the public sector. We specifically recommend a scale starting at £76,000 and rising by annual increments of £2,000 subject to satisfactory performance. Annual pay awards (when restored) should be in line with inflation.

5.4 Performance appraisal

The continuation of the contract and the award of annual increments should be subject to satisfactory performance appraisal through an appropriate scheme linked to the agreed annual work plan and its targets and goals. This process should be undertaken by Office Bearers on behalf of NILGA supported by advice from external advisers (preferably from SOLACE and to include an HR specialist professional adviser). All involved with this appraisal need to have training to equip them both to agree the targets through the work plan and to conduct the appraisal. The process also should be supported by an external facilitator who should have responsibility for ensuring that the process is understood and followed.

5.5 The Selection Process

NILGA should appoint a small panel with the power to make the appointment. This could comprise the Office Bearers. The panel should be advised by three SOLACE professional advisers one of whom should be an HR specialist. The selection process should include a rigorous assessment process.

6. Outcomes

The outcomes listed in your brief are reproduced below (bold lettering). Our comments are attached (*in italics*).

6.1 The contractor will be required to become familiar with NILGA's current policies and strategies and analyse its future role within the context of local government reform.

Our analysis shows that NILGA has been successful in working with the political parties but less successful in building relationships with Councils and with local authority Chief Executives. The future of the Review of Public Administration is uncertain but reform will happen and there is a vital role for NILGA in preparing for that. The current financial climate and the search for efficiencies and improvement need to form a major part of the agenda in the coming months.

6.2 The contractor will be required to conduct stakeholder analysis to identify the key issues, concerns, challenges and drivers facing NILGA, which impact upon the future direction of the organisation and the sector within which the new role of Chief Executive will exist.

Our stakeholder analysis has been limited because of the poor level of responses from Councillors. Everyone we did manage to consult was sure that there was an important role for NILGA although some were critical of the way things have operated in the past. We have a view of the challenges ahead and have indicated some views on how these should be addressed - see section 4.1 above.

6.3 The contractor will be required to review information, including the examination of the IDEA report which established NILGA's current structure with a view to determining if it is still 'fit for purpose' in the current climate, and undertake research to inform the future role.

Circumstances have changed significantly since the IDEA report was submitted. Some of it remains valid but other parts have been overtaken by events. There is a real problem with the current structure as we believe that it cannot continue to be afforded since DOE funding is unlikely to be maintained at the current level. In section 4.1 above we indicate those areas where we think NILGA should concentrate its work.

6.4 The contractor will be required to benchmark the future direction of local government in Northern Ireland against the future direction of comparable local government associations on a regional, national and international scale.

The situation in Wales with the WLGA is perhaps the nearest comparator to Northern Ireland where there are 22 Councils however all have much wider powers and larger budgets than Northern Ireland Councils. Welsh local authorities, on average, pay £136,000 a year in subscriptions. The NILGA budget is dwarfed by the WLGA budget. There is no parallel organisation in Southern Ireland. We are impressed with both the structure adopted by WLGA and the way it is dealing with some of the

common challenges and have made a number of suggestions in section 4.1 which we hope NILGA will follow.

6.5 The contractor will be required to benchmark comparable Chief Executive/leadership roles in local government on a regional, national and international scale.

The problem is that our research tells us that none of the roles either within local government or in the other local authority associations are comparable to that of Chief Executive of NILGA. The WLGA is the nearest comparable Association with 22 Councils in membership. But the revenue from subscriptions to WLGA is in excess of £3 million per annum and the range of functions undertaken by Welsh Councils bears no comparison with Councils in Northern Ireland. Similarly the size and revenue base for COSLA reflects the greater range of functions exercised by the 32 Scottish local authorities.

6.6 The contractor will be required to display highly effective interpersonal, communication and negotiating skills, inspiring confidence and credibility among sector stake-holders, and recognise issues of political sensitivity.

This is really for others to judge but we have enjoyed our dialogue with all the stakeholders we have encountered and we have secured valuable information.

6.7 The contractor will be required to comprehend, define and intelligibly articulate the future role of the Chief Executive/leadership in NILGA.

Again, you will judge if we have done this. We have a clear idea of what we see as the future role both for politicians and the Chief Executive. We have translated our views of the Chief Executive's role into job documentation (job context, job description and person specification).

6.7 The contractor will be required to advise on a job evaluated pay grade for this future role.

As explained above (section 4.2) we do not think that job evaluation is the way forward. We do have a view on the appropriate salary for the role and matters relating to this.

6.8 The contractor will be required to present his / her findings and recommendations, through the NILGA President and Office Bearers, to the Executive Committee.

We will be happy to do this.

6.9 The contractor will be required to translate the future role of Chief Executive into a written job description, with an employee specification (which clearly outlines the essential and desirable job related criteria in terms of qualifications and experience) and define associated skill sets / competencies that the post-holder must possess in order to be successful in the role.

Please see Appendix 1 below .

7. Acknowledgements

The AS Associates team would like to thank all those Members, NILGA staff, council chief executives and representatives of other public sector organisations who gave their time, experience and knowledge in providing the background and research material for this project. This help formed an invaluable part of this final report.

The Chief Executives and staff of both the WLGA and COSLA gave of their time providing much useful information and documentation for which we are most grateful.

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Graham Essex-Crosby
Susan Osborne*

September 2010.

APPENDIX 1

NORTHERN IRELAND
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
JOB DOCUMENTATION

JOB CONTEXT

The leadership at Officer level of NILGA provides both an exciting opportunity and a challenge in the current difficult climate facing local government in Northern Ireland.

The Review of Public Administration so far as it affects local government will not proceed as previously planned but that does not mean that it has disappeared over the horizon. The absence for the time being of legislative powers does not mean that change will not happen. Using existing powers to good effect plus the current financial constraints require innovation and creativity if change is to lead to improvements. NILGA needs to be at the forefront in enabling Councils to embrace new ways of working.

The Chief Executive of NILGA will need to possess a complex set of skills to undertake the tasks required to ensure that Councils are furnished with the ability to become stronger bodies that will impact positively upon the lives of people within the Province.

The greatest emphasis will be on building the relationships which will ensure that all parts of the public sector act in a co-ordinated and integrated way, delivering quality services for everyone.

The following Job Description and Person Specification encapsulate the tasks and skills required of the Chief Executive of this important and influential body at a crucial point in the development of local government.

Read dispassionately this documentation may look routine. It is not. The tasks are complex and the set of skills needed to carry out the tasks successfully will be many and varied. Compliance with this job documentation will be critical.

The newly appointed Chief Executive will have a unique and exciting opportunity to have a major influence on the development of public services within Northern Ireland.

JOB DESCRIPTION

The Chief Executive is the organisation's principal adviser on policy issues.

The Chief Executive has the responsibility for ensuring the efficient, effective and equitable discharge of NILGA's constitution on behalf of all NILGA members.

PRINCIPAL ACCOUNTABILITIES

- To provide the leadership, vision and strategic direction necessary to manage the interface between Councillors, Senior Officers and staff and to work in partnership with them to create strategies, policies and relationships that fulfil the organisation's objectives.
- To agree with the Office Bearers an annual business plan and associated performance targets for the organisation and to report annually to members on outcomes from the plan.
- To develop, lead and co-ordinate strategies that will drive organisational culture change and development within member Councils so as to transform local government services.
- To work in partnership with Councils to influence Government and other public service providers securing better public services across the Province.
- Ensure the management of effective systems to provide advice and support to the President, Office Bearers, Executive Committee, and NILGA working groups.

- To co-ordinate the activities of the staff of NILGA and to motivate managers and staff to deliver high levels of performance and to develop their full potential.
- To actively promote Northern Ireland local government regionally and nationally taking account of the interests of member Councils.
- To develop and maintain the wider networks and partnerships the organisation needs to deliver its objectives.
- To ensure that appropriate governance arrangements, including risk management measures, are in place.

PRINCIPAL DUTIES AND TASKS PERFORMED

STRATEGIC AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

- To provide support to the democratic decision making processes at all levels and to promote the active participation of member Councils in the organisation's affairs.
- To communicate NILGA's vision, priorities, objectives and processes effectively, both internally to staff and externally to member Council's, Government, partners, agencies and the public.
- To take overall responsibility for ensuring that the organisation's decisions and policies are implemented.
- To promote equality of opportunity and good relations in all the activities of the organisation.
- To lead by example by promoting at all times best practice and the highest standards of the public service ethos.

- To ensure that a performance management culture is firmly embedded within the organisation to secure quality services and their continuous improvement.
- To put in place effective arrangements for agreeing personal targets for staff and for regularly appraising and reporting on their performance.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

- To ensure the efficient and imaginative management of all resources (staff, finance, property and information), in support of the organisation's agreed targets for service delivery and policy development.
- To work effectively with staff and trades unions to secure the best possible use of human resources in pursuit of the organisation's objectives.
- To work closely with other agencies and partners to improve the impact of the way in which budgets are spent and resources are allocated.
- To secure additional funding to support the activities of the organisation.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING AND COMMUNICATION

- To work effectively with elected members, staff, trades unions and other interested stakeholders to secure the maximum advantage for member Councils.
- To actively foster and enhance positive relationships with Government, Councils, other public sector organisations, agencies and partners, including the voluntary sector and local business, as well as with other statutory bodies at national levels.
- To develop and implement effective arrangements for consultation with member Councils and partner organisations and for ensuring that comments received feed into strategic, policy and decision-making by the organisation.
- To develop and maintain positive relations with the media, to ensure the effective promotion of NILGA and local government generally.
- To be responsible to the Employers' Side of the NIJC for professional advice through the Secretariat.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE

- Proven success in providing high level, balanced advice and guidance on strategic and policy issues in a highly pressurised environment;
- Significant experience of successfully driving, managing and sustaining cultural and transformational change;
- Experience and success in building and enhancing partnerships with a wide range of organisations and individuals in the pursuit of organisational objectives ; and
- A proven track record of achievement.

VISION AND LEADERSHIP

- Ability to inspire elected members, senior managers, staff and partners towards the achievement of goals which realise the full potential of the organisation to assist and develop the role of Councils in Northern Ireland;
- Ability to look ahead, anticipate and to assess options, taking into account political priorities and leading others to ensure plans are based on the best options;
- Ability to influence, persuade and win the trust and commitment of individuals and teams externally, ensuring a “can do” attitude;

- Ability to understand the implications of promoting equality and diversity and to ensure that the development of policies and procedures reflects these needs;
- Ability to lead, support, motivate and develop individuals and teams within the organisation;
- Ability to create and maintain a culture where there are high levels of co-operation between everyone who can impact upon local government and the services it provides; and
- Ability to formulate, implement and monitor strategic plans to achieve objectives and advance the organisation's position at a regional, national and international level.

PERSONAL IMPACT

- Ability to forge, develop and maintain excellent working relationships with elected members, senior managers of government, local government, other public sector organisations, and other partner organisations maintaining and modelling the highest standards of professional and ethical behaviour, engendering the trust and respect of all others ;
- Ability to apply and encourage innovative thinking, to make valid judgements and reach sound decisions based upon good analysis of relevant information and risk assessment;

- Ability to recognise and deal appropriately with a wide range of issues which require sensitive handling because of their impact on others, media sensitivity or importance to stakeholders;
- Ability to work in partnership with all Councillors with political impartiality recognising the political impact and importance of issues; and
- Ability to deploy highly developed and effective written, oral and presentational skills including the ability to negotiate, to lobby and to act as an advocate for the organisation.