

Chief Executive's Office		
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Ref	MCN 11/02	

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Mr Peter McNaney
Chief Executive
Belfast City Council
Belfast City Hall
BELFAST
BT1 5GS

2nd February 2011

Dear Mr McNaney,

Re: Annual Plan, Subscriptions and Council Engagement

Annual Plan

As you may be aware NILGA set out in the Framework of Engagement an agreement to consult annually on its business plan and subscription fees for the year ahead. The draft business plan, which has been prepared by the NILGA Executive and approved by the Full Members' Meeting, is enclosed for your information at Annex A and includes a revised staffing structure. I would welcome your views and comments on the content of this plan.

Subscriptions

A review of the organisation's priorities was conducted by a sub-committee made up of representatives from each political party, NILGA Officers and Chief Executives from Councils. Following this review and taking into account the current economic climate, the decision was taken at the NILGA Executive Meeting on 14th January 2011 that there would be no annual increase in subscription fees to Councils for the year 2011-12.

Subscriptions are based on the most recent EPP for General Grant figures made available by the DoE Local Government Policy Division. The 2011/12 annual subscription charge for Belfast City Council has been calculated at £107,462 (excluding VAT).

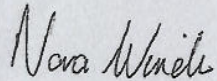
An invoice will be issued to your Council on the 1st April 2011. Subscriptions should be paid in full by 31st May 2011 as stated within the NILGA Constitution.

the voice of local government

NILGA reaffirms its commitment to develop a greater customer focused approach to its work. To help us meet your Council's needs we would welcome any written comments you may wish to make on the Draft Annual Plan or indeed any of NILGA's ongoing work.

Finally, to facilitate an opportunity for wider dialogue we would welcome the opportunity to deliver a short presentation to the Council and hear the views and concerns of your members. Please contact Sarah Little s.little@nilga.org in the office to arrange an appropriate time.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nora Winder".

Nora Winder
Acting Chief Executive



Northern Ireland Local Government Association

ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2011 - 2012

For Consultation with Councils

Introduction from the President – Councillor Evelyne Robinson

As President of the Northern Ireland Local Government Association I am delighted to launch the Association's Business Plan for 2011/2. This endeavours to outline our focus and priorities for the year ahead.

The whole sector is facing tough financial challenges and as an association we must endeavour to deliver high quality outcomes that reflect local council circumstances and priorities; relate closely to their experience; and, above all, provide value for money. Through this business plan the association seeks to achieve an improved focus on fewer priority areas.

*I strongly believe that the next 12 months will present the Association with an ideal opportunity to redefine its role and to focus on key activities **identified by councils**. For this to be successful we have recognised that we must have **a major shift in focus from communication outward to councils, to stronger more proactive engagement with councils**. While there is efficiency to be gained by undertaking certain activities on behalf of the sector as a whole, there is much to be lost if these activities are not expressly informed by the experience and practice of councils themselves and presented in a manner which has the effective backing of the whole sector.*

The key question we have sought to address in this year's business plan is how the Association can best add value to the work of councils. A key role should be to act as a regional advocate on behalf of the sector. By combining lobbying capacity on certain key issues, it should be possible to provide a more effective service to the sector at a lower cost and higher return than could be achieved if individual councils were acting alone. This can really only be achieved however if the Association is able to speak on behalf of the whole sector.

There is a perception sometimes that the work of the Association competes with councils rather than supports and augments individual council endeavours. If we are to counteract this, the processes and structures that connect the Association to councils (whether formal, informal, personal or system based) need to be re-designed to allow faster and easier communication in both directions.

*The proposal to undertake a comprehensive review of the Association's Constitution should be an encouragement to councils and an early indication of our commitment to take bold steps to revamp the main framework within which functions are delivered. It is hoped that this work will not only provide improved governance within the Association **BUT WILL ANTICIPATE AND DESIGN** a more appropriate working group and meeting structure, which will:-*

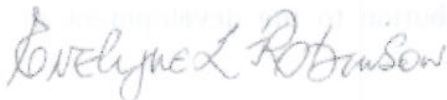
- *facilitate greater consultation with councils at the design stages;*
- *engage more actively with central government departments and other external partners to ensuring that local government's voice is heard at the policy design stage rather than the consultation stage; and also*
- *engage more actively across the service delivery areas within the sector to exercise a holistic approach to service delivery on behalf of citizens and communities.*

There is no doubt that good relationships with partners and stakeholders are crucial to the success of any local government association. We must therefore not only build on those areas where strong relationships already exist but more importantly critically assess and improve those areas where difficulties have been identified. This can be addressed, for example, through the development of Memorandum of Understandings with councils and formal protocols with other partners such as SOLACE.

In consultation with councils and partner organisations, the Association will identify and implement capacity building opportunities to provide councillors with a range of professional and personal development opportunities to assist them in developing critical political skills that will enhance their ability to make sound decisions. This will be especially important with the forthcoming local government elections and the potential for newly elected councillors.

It is clear the Association must live within its means and with the current economic climate and the likely termination of RPA funding streams the association must critically determine how to reduce its running costs and be prepared to look at innovative solutions. A key role for the Association has been identified as lobbying for pump priming support for the ICE programme which will support councils in their drive for improvement and efficiency.

Please take time to read our plan and then work with us to energise the sector so that we can collectively face the demands and challenges that lie ahead.



Cllr Evelyn L Robinson
PRESIDENT

Overview by the Chief Executive

In an endeavour to ensure we are responding to the right issues, and meeting the needs of the local government sector we are seeking to represent more effectively, we have reviewed our work activities, structures and processes. The challenge for the association in the year ahead will be to create a renewed regional body which can maximise the value it provides to the sector and truly represent the interests of all councils. The work programme for the year ahead has been designed on this basis.

In delivering on the Business Plan we want to ensure we are:-

- providing appropriate and necessary services that meet the demands of councils;
- reducing the potential for duplication of work; and
- adding value to councils.

We would ask councils to:-

- continue to contribute and increase their level of involvement and commitment; and
- provide regular feedback on the delivery of services to ensure the Association is meeting the sector's needs.

The Key Objectives for the 2011/12 financial year include the following:-

1. **Strengthening Local Democracy** – ensuring councils are at the forefront of decision making and provide an increasingly significant contribution to the development of central government policy
2. **Building the reputation of the Local Government Sector and individual councils** – ensuring the Association and individual councils are seen as strong, responsive and customer focused in the delivery of their services
3. **Supporting the delivery of Strong and Effective Local Government** – delivering on the reform of local government
4. **Supporting Councils to achieve greater Efficiency and Effectiveness in Service Delivery** – supporting the development and implementation of the ICE Programme
5. **Delivering High Quality Customer Service to Councils** – ensuring NILGA delivers a customer focused value for money service by improved focus on council and councillor needs



Nora Winder
Acting Chief Executive

1. STRENGTHENING LOCAL DEMOCRACY

Ensuring Councils are at the forefront of local decision making and provide an increasingly significant contribution to the development of central government policy

What we will do:

1.1	Maintain a strong voice for local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Agree a mechanism with councils for identifying local government priority areas and a means for regular review in order to ensure the Association is able to react quickly to changing circumstances ✓ Design and implement revised policy development arrangements that will deliver increased focus on council agreed priorities ✓ Engage more actively across the sector to ensure a holistic approach to service delivery for citizens and communities ✓ Engage actively with central government departments and other external partners to ensure local government's voice is heard at the policy design rather than the consultation stage
1.2	Influence and Negotiate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Working jointly with councils supporting them to develop sector wide policy positions e.g. economy, waste, planning, etc. ✓ Represent councils regionally, nationally and in Europe on all policy areas including negotiating on employment related issues ✓ Lobby for councils to have greater local decision making through influencing the development of regional, national and European policy ✓ Lobby for councils to have greater power and influence on how their areas are developed e.g. through the Community Planning pilots
1.3	Promote and support councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Identify and ensure delivery of training required for elected members ensuring they have the skills and capacity to fulfil their roles and responsibilities (working with partner organisations as required) ✓ Provide elected members with the necessary communications to ensure they are adequately briefed on policy issues to facilitate their decision making processes
1.4	Promote the sector in the Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Establish and deliver an effective media strategy to ensure the sector presents a positive image ✓ Respond to high profile issues in the media which are relevant to the Association and the local government sector

2. BUILDING THE REPUTATION OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SECTOR AND INDIVIDUAL COUNCILS

Ensuring the association and individual councils are seen as strong, responsive and customer focused.

What we will do:

2.1	Build Strong Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Consult with councils to identify their needs and expectations from an Association and develop an action plan to address issues and redesign a renewed organisation ✓ Review NILGA Constitution and structure it to represent the needs of councils; address balance of party/council representation; and maximise engagement of all councils; councillors and political parties ✓ Develop revised Memorandum of Understanding with councils ✓ Develop and implement an appropriate Communication and Engagement Strategy to ensure effective two way engagement with councils
2.2	Build Strong Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Identify and agree key partner organisations and form strong relationships to empower local government e.g. Political Parties, SOLACE, LGSC, NAC, LGAs, DOE, NICS Departments, NI Assembly ✓ Identify key issues for local government, agree roles and responsibilities and develop necessary protocols to ensure effective working partnerships are developed and maintained ✓ Develop and implement an appropriate Communication and Engagement Strategy to ensure effective two way communication between NILGA and its partners ✓ Actively monitor partnership engagement to identify benefits and positive outcomes as well as potential areas of dissatisfaction and take corrective action as soon as possible

3. SUPPORTING THE DELIVERY OF STRONG AND EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT		
Delivering on the reform of local government		
What we will do:		
3.1	Lead the Implementation of Local Government Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Liaise with DOE on issues of a strategic or regional nature ✓ Continue lobbying to secure appropriate legislative framework, policy and funding for the reform of local government, the transfer of functions, community planning and the power of well being ✓ Ensure appropriate arrangements are in place to support the delivery of local government reform ✓ Engage with councils on identification of issues and minimisation of risks ✓ Facilitate discussion and sharing of good practice ✓ Design and implement an appropriate communication and engagement strategy for local government reform ✓ Ensure appropriate liaison and identify how the ICE Programme can facilitate and support local government reform

4. SUPPORTING COUNCILS TO ACHIEVE GREATER EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS IN SERVICE DELIVERY		
Supporting the development and implementation of the ICE Programme		
What we will do:		
4.1	Provide political leadership for the ICE Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Agree and implement the Governance structures for the ICE Programme ✓ Forge strategic partnerships with other organisations to inform overall strategic direction of the ICE Agenda ✓ Ensure elected members have the necessary knowledge, skills and resources to undertake roles and responsibilities required ✓ Encourage and facilitate sharing of good practice across the sector ✓ Establish and maintain appropriate communication and engagement strategy for development and implementation of the ICE Programme

5. DELIVERING HIGH QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE TO COUNCILS

Ensuring NILGA delivers a customer focused, value for money service by improved focus on council and councillor needs

What we will do:

5.1	Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Establish effective Governance arrangements for the Association through implementation and maintenance of new Constitutional arrangements and Memorandum of Understanding✓ Actively monitor council, party and councillor engagement levels and customer satisfaction to identify areas of benefit, positive outcomes and potential areas of dissatisfaction and take corrective action as soon as possible✓ Review funding arrangements✓ Deliver Business Plan reporting progress against targets as appropriate to Office Bearers', Executive and Full Members' Meetings
5.2	Organisational Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Develop, consult and agree Business Plan✓ Review staffing requirements and develop, agree and implement revised staffing structure✓ Design, agree and implement required organisational structure✓ Review and implement accommodation requirements✓ Identify financial resources required and appropriate funding streams✓ Ensure provision of necessary staff with the appropriate skills, knowledge and experience to deliver the Business Plan and ensure they are managed in an appropriate manner✓ Ensure appropriate processes and systems are in place to deliver services in an efficient, effective manner with due regard to value for money

How will member councils know NILGA is delivering for them?

NILGA proposes to manage performance on behalf of its member councils more effectively by measuring the following:

Consultations on policy development

- Number of pre consultation requests received and responded to e.g. Department of Education, Development of Rural White Paper
- Number of consultation documents identified that NILGA should respond to and the number responded to on time
- Number of requests for evidence from Assembly Committees and number of evidence briefings delivered on time
- Impact of responses

Media Responses at a strategic level to sector wide issues

Pro-active promotion of Local Government achievements e.g. Local Government Awards, positive media promotions

Facilitate engagement within the sector and with external stakeholders

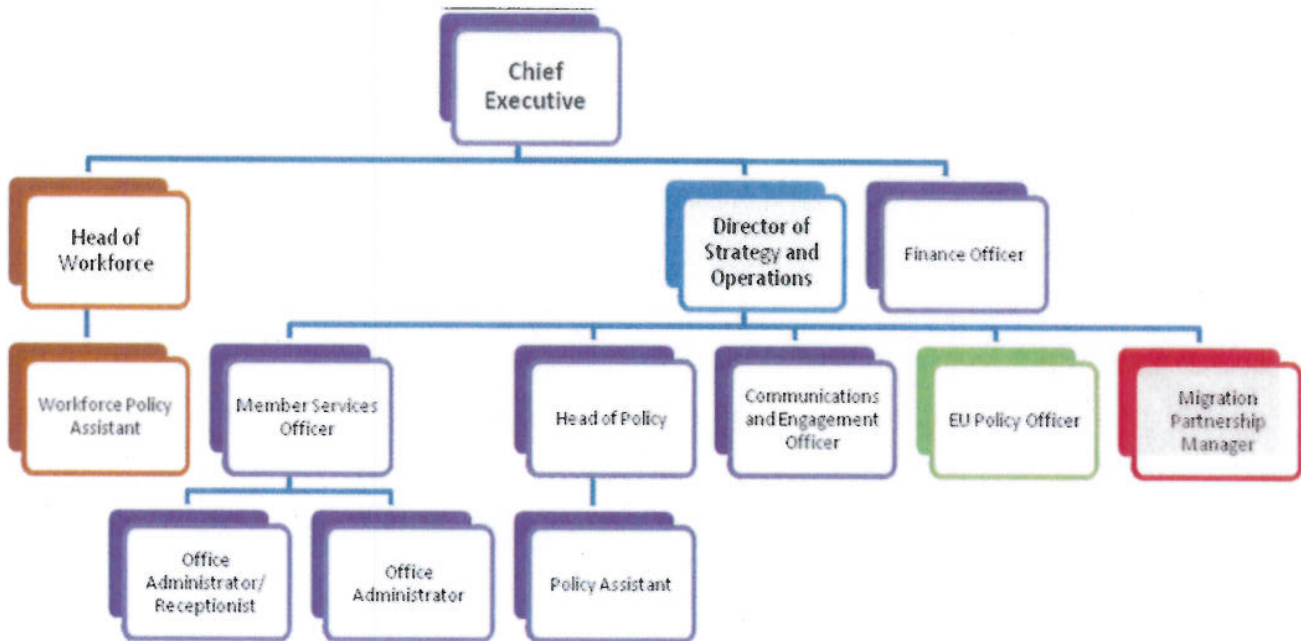
- Engagement events
- Meetings with Ministers
- Departments and agency representatives meeting with Local Government representatives on issues affecting Local Government e.g. Invest NI, Land and Property Services
- Attendance of Local Government representatives on EU bodies e.g. Committee of the Regions, EU Monitoring Committees and EU Congress
- Local Government Annual Conference

Impact on Local Government resources e.g. Increase in match funding with reference to EU Local Economic Development Funding approx £11m in 2010/11

We would welcome your comments on these measures and the development of a memorandum of understanding with all member councils in the incoming year.

INCOME	ESTIMATE 2011/2012	COMMENTS
NILGA	411,152	Annual subscriptions remaining at 2010/11 level
EU - DFP	65,775	
EU - LGA	30,000	
NISMP	102,798	Awaiting letter of offer
NIJC/JNC	121,550	
ULSTER IN BLOOM	10,500	To be confirmed
TOTAL INCOME	741,775	
EXPENDITURE		
NILGA Core Staffing	317,019	
Project Salaries Total	172,920	
Total Salaries	489,939	
General Expenditure	171,976	
Project Expenditure (excluding salaries)	79,860	
Total Expenditure	251,836	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	741,775	
SURPLUS/DEFICIT	0	

NILGA STAFFING STRUCTURE



-  NILGA Subscriptions
-  NIJC Funded
-  EU Project Funded
-  Migration Partnership Funded
-  Not Fully Funded

