From: The Minister

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23 December 2013

Dear Chief Executive

REFORM OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT – DEVELOPMENT OF A SCHEME BETWEEN DSD AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT CAPACITY BUILDING FOR REGENERATION/COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

In April 2015, under the Reform of Local Government, I will bring forward legislation that will place a statutory duty on Councils to have regard to the outcomes contained within the Regeneration and Community Development Framework and to guidance that my Department will issue. As part of this, the legislation will make the necessary powers, budgets and assets available to Councils; however it will be up to Councils to determine how they will exercise those powers and deploy resources. Because Councils will be free to exercise the powers and deploy the resources in ways that are different from DSD’s current practice, a discrete economic activity is not being transferred and for this reason there will be no compulsory transfer of DSD staff to Local Government (with the exception of Housing and Laganside functions that will be dealt with separately).

While there will be no TUPE transfer of DSD staff currently engaged in regeneration/community development work I am keen to work with Councils to ensure a smooth transition to the new arrangements and to ensure that there is the capacity needed to deliver going forward. To that end officials from DSD Development Offices are currently working with local government officers to draw up draft forward work plans setting out the regeneration and community development activities that the new Councils might aspire to deliver between 2015 and 2020. The expectation is that there will be fairly well refined work plans available by 31 March 2014 to feed into the draft Corporate Plans that will be prepared by the Statutory Transition Committees for new Councils.

My Department expects that by April 2014 Council clusters working with DSD officers will have begun to determine the staffing resources needed to deliver forward work plans for regeneration and community development. This work will identify the number and level of posts that will be required and the skills and experience that the post holders
should have. The aim will be to incorporate this into the work of Statutory Transition Committees on structures and staffing levels for new Councils.

Alongside this my officials have developed some draft principles as the basis for establishing a voluntary scheme (using provision in the Local Government Act 1972) that would support capacity building and allow Councils access to DSD staff with regeneration/community development experience under some type of secondment arrangements. Principles are attached to this letter and I welcome your comments on these ahead of more detailed work to be carried out on the drafting of the scheme.

I would ask that you provide your comments by Friday 17 January 2014 to:

Gillian Burns  
DSD Human Resources  
Transformational Change Team  
3rd Floor, James House,  
2 - 4 Cromac Avenue  
Gasworks Business Park,  
Belfast, BT7 2JA

Email: hrdivision@dssi.gov.uk

This correspondence has been copied to Statutory Transition Committees, Council Chairs, Mayors and Deputies, Council Officials, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (NI) and the Northern Ireland Local Government Association.

Yours sincerely

Nelson McCausland

NELSON McCUSAULAND MLA  
Minister for Social Development
Principles for the development of a scheme between DSD and Local Government to support capacity building for regeneration and community development.

1. The scheme will operate in partnership between local government and DSD.

2. The scheme will ensure that DSD is able to effectively deliver regeneration and community development in the period up to RLG transfer date.

3. The scheme will assist local government to develop the capacity it requires to effectively deliver regeneration and community development from the RLG transfer date onwards.

4. The scheme will ensure that there is a smooth transition between delivery arrangements.

5. Sufficient time will be built in to adequately develop the scheme.

6. The scheme will be taken forward through a phased approach, with 3 specific phases envisaged:
   - A preparatory period prior to April 2015
   - An embedding period between April 2015 and March 2017

7. Participation of staff in the scheme will be voluntary and based on an application and selection process.

8. The scheme will be open to members of Urban Regeneration and Community Development Group within DSD.