

The third meeting of the Central- Local Government Political Partnership Forum, took place on 18th January 2019. This Outcomes Note is provided by NILGA, the Northern Ireland Local Government Association, to provide a fast update to member councils, councillors and MLAs appointed to the Forum.

5 MLAs were in attendance on 18th January 2019:

- Mark H. Durkan MLA, SDLP,
- Peter Weir MLA, DUP,
- John Blair, MLA, Alliance,
- Fra McCann MLA, Sinn Fein,
- Roy Beggs MLA, UUP.

The following Local Government members were present:

- Ald Freda Donnelly, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council/NILGA Office Bearer;
- Cllr Sharon McAleer, Mid Ulster District Council,
- Cllr Scott Carson, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council,
- Cllr Richard Smart, Ards and North Down Borough Council,
- Cllr Seán McPeake, Mid Ulster District Council/NILGA Office Bearer,
- Cllr Seamus Doyle, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council/NILGA Office Bearer Alternate,
- Cllr Maoliosa McHugh, Derry City and Strabane District Council,
- Ald Tom McKeown, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council,
- Ald Alan McDowell, Ards and North Down Borough Council/NILGA Office Bearer,
- Ald Arnold Hatch, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council/NILGA Office Bearer



KEY OUTCOMES & ACTIONS

Terms of Reference:

There was substantial roundtable discussion, building on the first draft of the Terms of Reference for the Central – Local Government Political Partnership Forum.

Agreed:

Revisions to the Terms of Reference will be finalised and the final draft distributed to Councils and appointed MLAs week commencing 28th January 2019.

Outcomes from previous meeting:

In respect of Paper B, correspondence and data received from the Chair of the Education Authority; John Blair MLA commented that the information provided represented only part of what was needed. He emphasised that information on smaller towns and villages with 2+ schools with low pupil numbers would be required. Whilst Mr Blair would be using his own endeavours, it was agreed that this would be further pursued by the Political Forum.

Miscellaneous Roads Order 2010:

It was confirmed that a meeting had been agreed to by the Department for Infrastructure on this issue, also to include PSNI, NILGA and a council Chief Executive.

Members engaged in policy and community impact discussion, and it was noted that in some cases the prohibitive costs of traffic management had led to the cessation of events such as the Ards Half Marathon.

Issues raised by Councils:

Agreed: Political Forum Members agreed to support and refer the letter from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council to The Executive Office (TEO).

Members, both MLAs and councillors, referenced the importance of devolved political scrutiny on matters of key policy and budget concern, supporting the attendance at future meetings of specific Permanent Secretaries and council Chief Executives.

Key note presentation – Department for Communities (DfC):

Responding to an overview of the year past and a preview of the year ahead, Political Forum members noted the support expressed by Tracy Meharg, the new DfC Permanent Secretary, in her letter, together with the sentiment and content expressed by Nichola Creagh, Local Government Division, DfC.

Both MLAs and Councillors sought the substantial input by Local Government in any proposed review of RPA. Members also supported the alignment of NILGA's proposed, more detailed review, to be commissioned by the end of March 2019, to the Department's proposals.

Code of Conduct and Councillors Guide:

Members discussed the issue of the local government election, 2nd May 2019, emphasising the importance of the Councillors Guide and a Code of Conduct which is easy to understand and implement, calling for greater consistency with the MLA code and improvements in the process.

It was further noted that the independent CODE OF CONDUCT REVIEW is awaiting Ministerial sign-off, whilst being in no way a politically contentious issue.

AONB:

Several councillors and an MLA highlighted the importance of the Central – Local Government Political Partnership Forum, encouraging both the strong communication of its existence and outcomes, together with reinforcing the message of restoring the Legislative Assembly as soon as possible.

Other members highlighted the importance of inviting the Permanent Secretary of Infrastructure to the next meeting, to engage on a variety of DfI matters, including but not restricted to road closures related to event traffic management.

NB: Please note that a fuller version of Outcomes and Actions will follow in Draft Minutes.



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