

# The **Councillor's** Handbook

pointing you  
in the right  
direction...



# Welcome/ Introduction & Executive Summary



## Table of Contents

	PAGE
<b>Welcome to The Councillor's Handbook</b>	X
Executive Summary	X
<b>1. Being a Councillor</b>	
■ A councillor's role	
■ Appointments to outside bodies	X
■ Code of Local Government Conduct	X
■ Accountability	X
■ Decision-making and the law	X
<b>2. Elected Member Support</b>	
■ Starting out	X
■ Financial support	X
■ Right to release from employment	X
■ Supporting organisations	X
■ Information sources	X
■ Induction checklist	
<b>3. Council Functions</b>	
■ The role of local government	X
■ Council operations	X
■ Committees	
■ Meetings	
■ Minutes	
■ Chief Executive and Officers	
■ Local government finance	X
■ Local government expenditure	
■ Sources of income	
■ The rating system	
■ Annual audit	
<b>4. Local Government Issues</b>	
■ Best Value	X
■ Community Planning and the Power of Well-being	X
■ Community Relations	X
■ District Policing Partnerships	X
■ e-Government	X
■ Equality Issues	X
■ European funding in NI 2000-06	X
■ Freedom of Information	X
■ Good Relations	X
■ Human Rights	X
■ New Localism	X
■ Performance Management	X



■	Planning	X
■	Recycling and Waste Management	X
■	Review of Public Administration	X
■	Single Status	X

## 5. Personal Development

■	Communication	X
■	Processing information	X
■	Policy and decision-making	X
■	Managing budgets	X
■	People management	X
■	Utilising the media	X
■	Time management	X

## 6. Central Government Departments

	Overview of main bodies and functions	X
--	---------------------------------------	---

## 7. Central Government Agencies and Other Public Bodies

	Overview of main bodies and functions	X
--	---------------------------------------	---

## Reference

■	i.	Local government abbreviations and acronyms	X
■	ii.	Registered political parties in Northern Ireland	X
■	iii.	Glossary of local government financial terms	X
■	iv.	Contributors to The Councillor's Handbook	X

## Appendices

Notes

## Welcome to The Councillor's Handbook

Congratulations on your appointment as a councillor. This Handbook has been compiled by the Steering Group for Elected Member Training as a basic introduction and guide to your role as an elected member.

Newly elected councillors may feel overwhelmed by the range of functions they are expected to fulfil, particularly when working with colleagues who have many years' local government service. Hopefully this guide will provide the kind of information that will help the transition into the role of an elected representative. Established councillors may also wish to refer to the guide to update themselves on current local government issues.

The Handbook has been structured to allow you either to read the content in totality or merely to refer to certain sections at your leisure. It has been produced in binder format to allow you to insert new material or replace sections that will be updated as required. The blank final section entitled 'Notes' has been provided for you to file your own comments or documents from other sources that you may find useful to retain.

This guide is also available in a large print hard copy or electronic CD (which can be enlarged onscreen) from the NILGA offices. The Handbook can also be downloaded online free of charge from [www.nilga.org](http://www.nilga.org) or [www.lgsc.org.uk](http://www.lgsc.org.uk)

The Steering Group wishes to thank the Northern Ireland Local Government Association, the Northern Ireland Joint Council, the National Association of Councillors and the Local Government Staff Commission for their input into the compilation, editing and production of the Handbook. The Steering Group is also indebted to the councillors, officers, and representatives from outside bodies who willingly assisted in supplying material.

Care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the information within the Handbook. However, as the content has been compiled from various sources and contributors, the Steering Group cannot accept liability for any errors or omissions in the text.

The Steering Group is keen to amend any information within the Handbook which may be incorrect or out of date, and would encourage users to inform NILGA's Support Services Officer (Ms Denise McStravog) in order that updated information can be issued on an ongoing basis. The Steering Group also intends to add to and update the Handbook in response to both councillors' suggestions and the changing environment of local government.



## Executive Summary

This Handbook will introduce you to your role and responsibilities as a newly elected councillor within the Northern Ireland local government sphere and wider community. The Handbook's contents have been sourced from a range of public sector organisations, and variously outline either statutory requirements that all councillors must adhere to (for instance, acting within the restrictions of the council's legislative remit), factual details of procedures that many councillors are commonly required to follow (such as 'Standing Orders' which may differ slightly between councils) or basic practical advice for you to consider as an individual councillor (for example, ways in which you might prioritise your workload).

This Executive Summary is intended to assist with your orientation through the Handbook, and provides an overview of the topics that are described in detail within each chapter.

## Responsibilities and obligations

Your responsibilities as an elected member will primarily be two-fold, as explained in chapter 1. You will be responsible to:

1. Your electorate by solving problems, providing civic leadership and representing the interests of individuals and groups from your electorate to various council meetings; and
2. Your council by actively participating in the organisation's corporate management and complying with statutory requirements.

Statutory requirements, applicable to all elected members in Northern Ireland, include attendance at council and associated meetings, a requirement to act reasonably when making decisions related to council business and mandatory adherence to a prescribed code of behaviour known as the Code of Local Government Conduct. If you have not already subscribed to the Code, you can request a copy of the document from your council's offices.

Moreover, your role in representing your electorate may not be limited to acting on its behalf at your council's monthly and committee meetings but could also involve representing your council as a collective unit to external bodies, central government, partnership organisations and stakeholders.

As a consequence of the wide-ranging functions you will fulfil as a councillor, you are obligated at all times to consider the following:

1. The impact that any personal financial interests held by you or your family members might hold on your dealings within public life and, accordingly, removal of yourself from situations which could lead to a conflict of interest between your roles as both a councillor and private individual;
2. That, in acting reasonably, you make careful and reasoned decisions which lie within the restrictions of council powers as determined in law; and
3. The impact of your council's internal management and service provision policies on the community at large. This requires that during the process of policy-making or responding to policy consultations you must consider the ways in which council policy decisions and policy communication strategies are determined, implemented and reviewed in the context of adherence to human rights and equality legislation.

## Information and support

In recognition of your commitment to your role, support has been made available to allow you to claim compensation for the necessary expenditure of your personal time and resources as you undertake council activities, details of which can be found in chapter 2.

Your council will advise you on how to complete forms in order to claim compensation via a range of allowances, which include:

1. A basic allowance to cover incidental costs;
2. A meeting attendance allowance;
3. A range of special responsibility allowances, payable in relation to certain groups and dependent upon your level of involvement within the council / outside bodies to which you are nominated; and
4. A travel and subsistence allowance, the rate of which is determined by the Department of the Environment (DoE), which can be accessed to compensate for the mileage travelled by councillors across Northern Ireland to local government meetings held in distant venues.

The law also requires your employer to facilitate you with a reasonable period of absence from work to allow you to fulfil council duties during working hours if required; however it is advisable that you discuss the flexibility of your employing organisation with the appropriate manager at the earliest opportunity.

A range of organisations exist to assist you in fulfilling your various tasks as a councillor, including the Local Government Training Group which compiled this Handbook, the National Association of Councillors and the Northern Ireland Local Government Association. These organisations are compiled of elected member representatives nominated from across the 26 councils, and can offer support, advice and training to elected members in their particular areas of expertise, as outlined in chapter 2.

A directory of information sources is also provided for personal research purposes, listing

websites where you can find details relating to each Northern Ireland district council, relevant legislation and local statistics, policy development within local and central government, or resources for your personal development. In order that you are able to find the basic tools and documents that you require to settle in to your surroundings and begin to work effectively as a councillor, an Induction Checklist can also be found in chapter 2.

## Power and procedures

To explain the ways in which you and your colleagues, as members of the full council, will delegate certain matters for consideration to committees, chapter 3 explains their functions according to the following categories:

1. The central council committee (which deals with overarching policies);
2. Functional committees (which are designed to deal with specific issues, for instance a Leisure Services Committee); and
3. Joint committees that draw contain members from other councils (which deals with wider issues such issues as tourism).

Each council will use certain unique meeting procedures to deal with, for example, raising questions to council through reference to the Chair, voting via a show of hands and the use of minutes to record decisions; however some useful standard local government meeting procedures are outlined chapter 3.

You will be aware that local government is the third tier of government in Northern Ireland, restricted by (but able to influence) the decisions of Westminster and Stormont, and that each council is categorised according to district, borough or city status. Since 1998, the power to control economic and social matters in Northern Ireland has been devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly, and when in session, the Assembly operates eleven central government departments: the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, and Departments which deal separately with agriculture and rural development; culture, arts and leisure; education; employment and

learning; enterprise, trade and investment; environment; finance and personnel; health, social services and public safety; regional development; and social development.

To help you to assess which central government department or agency is responsible for the legislative framework and monitoring of a certain aspect of public affairs in Northern Ireland, the chapters 6 and 7 of the Handbook contain a handy contact details and reference guide.

As the third tier of government in Northern Ireland, councils have a direct service provision role and a representative and a consultative role in central government policy-making, however a strengthened role for local government is envisaged by the sector following the Review of Public Administration (RPA), expected to occur in 2009, where increased functions are likely to be transferred to district councils.

## Knowledge and development

Certain current issues, introduced in chapter 4 of the Handbook, are pertinent to district councils across Northern Ireland, and (particularly in the light of the RPA) questions are being raised about the possibility of modernisation of administrative procedures and service delivery (to be achieved perhaps through a local government e-Government agenda) and introduction of the Power of Well-being to allow councils to determine needs for their particular area and use the main source of their income, acquired through a rating system that is also due to change in 2007, to fund council projects accordingly. Recent alterations to the provision of European funding and newly introduced legislation on the Freedom of Information, designed to create transparency in governmental dealings with the public, will also have impacted recently on your council.

Getting to grips with these issues and the technical aspects of your role can be difficult, and chapter 5 provides practical advice on communication and public speaking, policy

development, recruitment procedures, and using the media to your advantage in addition to guidelines on time, information and budgetary management.

The Local Government Training Group would like to wish you the best of luck in your new role, and hope that you find life as an elected member to be challenging, rewarding and enjoyable.



# 1. Being a Councillor



## 1 Being a Councillor

This chapter will help you understand how a councillor fits into and helps determine the council's operations and how your council affects, and is affected by, the community, stakeholders and other organisations.

There are currently 582 councillors across the 26 councils of Northern Ireland.

### A councillor's role

As a councillor, you were elected to play a part in planning, running, monitoring, and developing council business, either as a representative of a political party or as an independent member. Collectively within each council, the councillors decide what is in the public interest amidst a range of conflicting issues and views.

A councillor's role is varied, and requires an individual assessment of the ways you wish to undertake your work, but your main areas of responsibility include:

### Representation

- Listening to, and taking account of, the needs and views of local people and key stakeholders when considering policy proposals and making decisions
- Attending full council and other council meetings to effectively represent the interests of your District Electoral Area, individuals within your DEA and the wider council area
- Explaining council policy and making sure policy has been carried out fairly
- Participating in the activities of any outside bodies to which you are appointed by the council, eg health boards, and providing two-way communication to council as required

### Problem-solving

- Being available for constituents to raise enquiries and issues of importance, taking action fairly and without prejudice
- Developing a working knowledge of the organisations, services, activities etc,

important to the community's well-being and identity

- Undertaking casework such as representing an individual or family at special appeals

### Community leadership

- Contributing to good governance and actively encouraging community participation in decision-making
- Ensuring that local people are informed about services in their area, their rights as constituents, council decisions that affect them and the reasons behind such decisions
- Meeting regularly with key stakeholders and supporting local partnerships and organisations
- Facilitating partnership working at the local level with other public and voluntary agencies
- Formulating a vision for the borough, developing the commitment of the community

### Corporate management

- Participating in the collective policy-making, governance and management of the council
- Helping decide service priorities, agreeing and setting budgets and determining which rate is to be struck
- Initiating debate on issues related to the council's functions
- Monitoring and challenging the council's performance against targets in all aspects of council activity
- Ensuring that council decisions are implemented and carried out fairly

### Statutory duties

- Attending meetings- the Local Government Act 1972 (Section 9) lays down that failure to attend council or committee meetings for a period of 6 months, unless your reason has been approved by the council, will lead to you ceasing to be a member
- Acting reasonably- councils can only incur expenditure on functions or items for which legislation gives authority. The Local Government Auditor can review all decisions: if an amount illegally spent exceeds £2,000 the members concerned may be disqualified
- Following the Code of Local Government Conduct (see overleaf)

For other approaches, you could view the websites [www.labour.org.uk](http://www.labour.org.uk); [www.bristol-city.gov.uk](http://www.bristol-city.gov.uk); and [www.canterbury.gov.uk](http://www.canterbury.gov.uk) to learn how councillors fulfil their roles (although some information is specific to the role of local government in England). Chapter 5 of this Handbook also provides some basic tips on developing your knowledge and skills to help you fulfil the above roles.

In addition to the duties of an elected member, you may also wish to consider which values you should uphold in your dealings as a councillor. The Committee on Standards in Public Life (the Nolan Committee) for example, suggest the following values as suitable for councillors to aspire to:

- Selflessness
- Honesty
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Openness
- Personal judgement
- Respect for others
- Leadership
- Stewardship
- Duty to uphold the law
- Integrity

## Appointments to outside bodies

All councils appoint elected members to represent the interests of their council on a range of outside bodies, for instance NILGA and Education and Library Boards. This process offers an excellent opportunity for councillors to experience the operations of other public sector organisations and to influence the wider public sector agenda. You will find information on the appointments and nomination processes from your party, the bodies involved and within your council.

## The d'Hondt System

Your council may operate the d'Hondt system to appoint members to outside bodies (and to internal committees). It is explained here by Dr Sidney Elliott of Queen's University:

The d'Hondt, or highest average method, is named after a Belgian lawyer from the 1870s. Unlike single transferable vote, it does not use

a quota or formula to allocate seats or posts. Instead, these are allocated singularly and one after another. The basic idea is that a party's vote total is divided by a certain figure that increases as it wins more seats. As the divisor becomes bigger, the party's total in succeeding rounds gets smaller, allowing parties with lower initial totals to win seats. The divisor in the first round is one (i.e. it has no effect) and thereafter it is the total number of seats gained plus one.

The following is an example of how the system would work when being used to allocate committee chairpersons in the Assembly. Suppose the number of seats won in the Assembly were as in the top line of the table overleaf. Follow each round horizontally across the table to see which party has the biggest total and therefore wins that round. Follow each party's total vertically to see it decrease as it wins more seats.

These figures are for illustrative purposes only.

Round	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	39	16	2	2	9	23	17
2	19.5	16	2	2	9	23	17
3	19.5	16	2	2	9	11.5	17
4	13	16	2	2	9	11.5	17
5	13	16	2	2	9	11.5	8.5
6	13	8	2	2	9	11.5	8.5
7	9.75	8	2	2	9	11.5	8.5

A has the highest total, 39, so wins the first round. A's figure is now divided by 2 (its total seats + 1) to give a new figure of 19.5. The highest total for round two, on the second line, is 23 for F - which wins the seat and sees its figure reduced to 11.5. Round three goes to A again as its adjusted figure of 19.5 is again the highest. The new A figure is 13 - its original total of 39 divided by 3 (2 seats + one).

Rounds four and five go to G and B with totals of 17 and 16 respectively. Their adjusted figures are 8.5 and 8. The highest total for the sixth round is 13, giving A its third representative. The party's new figure is 9.75, based on its original total of 39 divided by 4 (3 seats + 1). The final round in this example goes to F with a total of 11.5. If the table continued, the new F figure would be 7.67. This process would continue until all the posts or seats are filled.



## Code of Local Government Conduct

Councillors should of course maintain the highest standards of conduct and ethics in the performance of all council duties, and abide by their council's standing orders. In 2003 the Department of the Environment (DoE) issued a circular to all district councils drawing attention to a revised Northern Ireland Code of Local Government Conduct, based on a code issued in Great Britain. It was recommended that each council adopt the Code.

It should be noted that all councillors are required to make a declaration on taking office that they will be guided by the Code. It is advisable that you read the code and associated documents in full. These can be obtained from the section that deals with Member Services in your council..

### Areas of a councillor's conduct addressed by the code include:

● Public duties	● Working relations with other councillors
● Accountability and openness	● Working relations with council employees
● Confidentiality	● Declaration and registration of interests
● Duty to uphold the law	● Membership of committees and sub-committees
● Dispensations	● Chair of council, committee or sub-committee
● Integrity	● Family members who hold / apply for council appointments
● Objectivity and propriety	● Selflessness and stewardship

Now that the code has been in operation for a number of years, the DoE proposes to review the code by establishing a working group representative of local government interests and including officials from SOLACE, the Local Government Staff Commission, NILGA and Local Government Audit. The proposed remit of the group will be to conduct a review; make recommendations or revisions; consider whether there is a need for a mandatory code; and consider options for monitoring the application of the code, including any enforcement or appeal procedures.

### Accountability

All councillors must adhere to the statutory provisions which govern councillors 'pecuniary', ie financial, interests (referred to within the Code of Local Government Conduct). The reason for these provisions is to avert any conflict that might occur between your personal interest as an individual and your public duty as a councillor.

As this legislation imposes serious obligations, and failure to comply with the law could lead to criminal proceedings, it would be advisable for new councillors to review the provisions in full.

They are summarised below:

If a councillor has any direct or indirect pecuniary interest in, for example a proposed contract or other matter, and is present at a council or committee meeting at which the subject is under consideration, he or she has a duty to disclose the nature of that interest as soon as practicable once the meeting begins and not to take part in the discussion of, or to vote on any question with respect to, that item. Unless the matter is under consideration by the council merely as part of a report of a committee and does not become the subject of separate debate, he or she also has a duty to withdraw from the meeting while that item is being considered. Withdrawal from the meeting means that he or she must move to outside the meeting room and beyond the sight and hearing of those present at the meeting.

If the councillor in question has a pecuniary interest in the item under consideration due only to ownership of shares in a company and the total nominal value of those shares is below a certain limit then the rule will not have effect (see section 28(ii) for detailed information). Other situations where the duty to disclose does not arise include:



- If the pecuniary interest arises in regard to a contract or proposed contract for the supply of services, facilities or goods to the public at large
- If the pecuniary interest is of such a general nature or is so insignificant or trivial that the councillor's judgement is not likely to be affected or influenced
- If the only reason for disclosure is that the councillor is a member or an officer of a public body
- If the only reason for disclosure is that the councillor is a member of a company or other body (if that councillor can prove that he or she has no beneficial interest in the shares in the company or in its profits)

The interest of one of two spouses living together is deemed to be the interest of the other, unless the other shows that he or she was unaware of the interest of his or her spouse. A person is treated as having a pecuniary interest if:

- He or she (or by, with or through another person) has an interest in the outcome of the item under consideration or any related commission, advantage or benefit
- He or she (or any nominee) is a member of a company or other body with which the contract is made or which has a direct pecuniary interest in the matter
- He or she is a partner, or in the employment, of a person with whom the contract is made or who has a direct pecuniary interest in the matter

Councillors are also required by law to disclose, in writing, any relevant family relationship that the councillor is aware of between him or her and anyone who holds (or is a candidate for) any council post. If a councillor is present at any meeting at which issues relating to the appointment, remuneration, tenure, promotion, etc., of his or her relation are being considered, he or she must withdraw from that meeting while the issue is being discussed.

A 'relevant family relationship' is deemed to exist between a councillor and an officer or candidate if they are husband and wife, or if the officer or candidate, or the husband or wife of the officer or candidate is the councillor's:

- Parent
- Grandparent
- Niece or nephew
- Son or daughter
- Brother or sister
- Aunt or uncle
- Spouse
- Grandson or granddaughter

Failure to make such disclosures or withdraw from a meeting is a criminal offence, although statutory defences can be invoked in certain situations. It is your own personal responsibility to decide whether you have a pecuniary interest or family relationship to disclose, or whether you should refrain from taking part in a meeting. It is not the function or duty of your council's officers to determine the matter, and each councillor should decide for themselves in the light of personal circumstances.

## Decision-making and the law

You must be sure that the decisions you make in relation to the council or in your role as an elected member are lawful. The law demands that councillors making decisions adopt a reasoning process. This might be undertaken mentally - or even vocally - by questioning each situation, and answering those questions honestly and realistically. Example questions might include:

- What needs to be known before the council decides to act and where do these questions come from?
- Where do the answers to the questions come from and how convincing are the grounds for each answer?
- Is the proposed action necessary or are there alternatives?
- What worthwhile goal will be achieved by the proposed action?
- What harm may result from the action and is the goal worth more?
- What are the practicalities of the proposed action?
- What duties is the council under in this situation?
- Is the council acting in accordance with equality and human rights legislation?

The significance of asking questions is clearer in the context of the law's requirements; this section will explore the central requirements of administrative law as they apply to council powers.

A summary list of the requirements follows:

- Acts of a local authority must be within the scope of its statutory powers
- Where a discretion is given to a local authority by statute, it must exercise that discretion
- In exercising its discretion, a local authority must have regard to legally relevant considerations, and must disregard legally irrelevant considerations
- In exercising its discretion, a local authority must not set its face against the policy of parliament
- In exercising its discretion, a local authority must not act for an improper purpose
- In exercising its discretion, a local authority must direct itself properly in law and must follow the procedures laid down by law
- In exercising its discretion, a local authority must not act 'irrationally'
- In exercising its discretion, a local authority must follow the principles of natural justice or must act fairly, whichever of the two approaches is appropriate
- In exercising its discretion, a local authority must act in good faith

Added to these are the requirements of human rights and equality legislation, (see pages X-Y of this chapter).

## Acting within the statutory powers of the council

A council's existence and powers are a result of parliamentary legislation; hence the council cannot go beyond those powers in making decisions.

Decided cases show that any council has the following powers:

- those which are clearly provided for by the legislation under which it proposes to act - known as express powers
- those which can reasonably be read into that legislation - known as implied powers
- those which can reasonably be said to be necessary companions to the express powers - known as incidental or consequential powers

In deciding that the council should act, you should be satisfied that the council is entitled under the legislation to take the suggested course of action. You could ask that the matter be referred to the council's legal advisers, or request that officers present a consideration of possible legal consequences among their recommendations.

## Where a discretion is given to a local authority, it must exercise it

In holding power, councils have to choose between using power, and not using it. A council will not be permitted by the courts to neglect to make this choice. In practice this means that a council must make a well-considered choice as to whether or not it should act.

The principle of choosing whether or not to act can be broken down into a number of elements:

- Unless a council has been given legislative authority to do so, it cannot validly delegate its powers of decision to its officers - it is the council's decision and it alone must take it (see Local Government Miscellaneous Provisions Order 1985 Article 26 'Delegation of Functions to Officers');
- Equally, without legislative authority to do so, a council must not be swayed by the attitude of another body or person in making its decision - it is the council's decision and the council itself must take that decision;
- A council cannot bind itself to a course of future action incompatible with the future exercise of its statutory powers: in fact the law will simply ignore any attempt by the council to bind itself in this way - it is the council's power and it must allow itself freedom to exercise it;
- A council can adopt a policy which it will follow in the exercise of its powers, but the policy must not be an improper one and the council must be prepared to depart from its policy when the occasion demands - again it is the council's power and it must allow itself freedom to exercise it

This last point often causes problems for councils in Northern Ireland. It is the nature of politics that councillors seek election on the

basis of certain policies. Once elected, councillors seek to put those policies into practice to honour their election pledges. Hence, in a democratic system, where a particular party or group of like-minded parties controls a council, council policy often reflects the policy of the controlling group.

However, the law places tight constraints on what policies may be adopted by councils and on the way in which councils follow those policies. Policies must not be based on legally irrelevant considerations, and must not be unreasonable in the eyes of the law. Indeed, all the requirements of administrative law apply to the decision to adopt a policy.

Once a policy is adopted, the council cannot follow the policy so inflexibly that it amounts to a blanket advance decision applicable to every situation regardless of the circumstances. Where there is good reason for a council to depart from its policy, it must do so. If, however, the outcome of council decision-making processes can be known before the matter is even discussed by the council, any decision is likely to be unlawful. The council must exercise its powers of decision on a case-by-case basis. Furthermore, a council must be ready to weigh up the 'pros' and 'cons' of a suggested change in its policy, or policy exceptions and exemptions by listening to suggestions and representations with an open mind.

Voting according to party line is a common feature of political life, but this can create difficulties for the individual if it necessarily involves councillors surrendering their individual discretion. If this happens, the council may not have taken a proper decision. Councillors must apply their individual judgement in each instance. It is obvious that a council should always consider representations made to it that it should depart from its policy.

## Exercising Discretion

A long-established principle of administrative law holds that any body to which a power is given cannot exercise that power as it pleases, but must do so reasonably and lawfully, known by lawyers as 'discretion'. Discretion allows

no place for whim, arbitrariness, or jumping to conclusions, but rather requires taking reasonable decisions on reasonable grounds.

The due exercise of discretion turns on a series of rules and principles:

- A local authority must have regard to legally relevant considerations. Often, the legislation under which a council acts will state or imply the matters that the council should take into account in coming to a decision. Likewise, some legislation is accompanied by relevant codes of practice, which should be considered by any council taking a decision.

Where the legislation is silent, it can be difficult to decide what factors are relevant and, in such a situation, what is legally relevant will depend on the circumstances and nature of the matter. In any event, councillors should consider possible alternatives to the proposed course of action, and whether it is in ratepayers' interests, in reaching every decision.

Once the legally relevant factors have been determined, you must weigh up the factors and decide what level of importance to attach to each. Theoretically, councillors can validly decide that no importance should be attached to a particular factor; however this may be interpreted as meaning that the council simply ignored the factor.

- A local authority must disregard legally irrelevant considerations. What is not legally relevant is legally irrelevant, even though it may seem relevant by everyday standards. Extreme examples include political benefit to the person taking the decision, or ulterior political motives, such as seeking to put pressure on bodies affected to toe a particular line.
- Local authorities must not set their face against the policy of parliament by refusing to act in accordance with legislation or by frustrating its purpose. On occasion, central government will create legislation which is deeply unpopular at local government level e.g. poll tax in the 1980's when a number of English authorities declined to put the

legislation into force, leading to successful legal action by central government. The doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty means that the wishes of parliament reign supreme and must be followed by public bodies entrusted with the task of implementing policy.

- Local authorities must not act for an improper purpose, that is, for a purpose other than that of the legislation. This could involve carrying out a statutory function with a view to taking private advantage, seeking to favour council employees or users of council services at the expense of the ratepayer, refusing a licence not on the ground of unfitness but to punish the applicant for past wrongdoing, or delegating powers for political ends as opposed to benefits in efficiency. Where a council acts with mixed motives, the courts will only uphold the decision where the proper motive is dominant.
- A local authority must direct itself properly in law. A council fails to direct itself properly in law when it misinterprets the law in reaching its decision. You will note, probably with some concern, that the law does not regard mistaken advice from solicitors or counsel as a valid excuse. Part of directing itself properly in law will involve a council in making a calculated and reasoned choice between equally lawful options. (This heading overlaps with the next, in that a council may not follow the correct procedure because it has misunderstood the legislative requirements in that regard.)
- Councils must follow to the letter the procedures laid down for the exercise of their discretion. Many of the decision-making powers given to councils must only be used after certain procedures have been followed. Failure to do so may leave even the most sensible decision vulnerable to challenge.
- A local authority must not act 'irrationally', which means that the council must not take a decision which no reasonable person could take - a form of unreasonableness known to lawyers as 'Wednesbury

unreasonableness' after the council which gave it its name.

It must be understood that many not too obviously unreasonable decisions can fall within this category, and councils should be wary. Often, political decisions are struck down on this ground, as where a council makes a decision that by its nature pleases part of the community but is offensive or disadvantageous to another part of that community.

You should not assume that any mistake that councillors may make would be grounds for a challenge for Wednesbury unreasonableness. The law allows for decisions made in good faith to be wrong, just as long as they were reached lawfully.

- Local authorities should follow natural justice or act in accordance with the duty to act fairly. It is not completely clear at present to what extent local authorities must comply with the demands of natural justice in reaching decisions. Certainly, where legislation requires it, or where the decision-making process involves weighing up 'pros' and 'cons' and affects the rights of an individual or body, failure to use natural justice may well lead to the decision being struck down.

Where the decision-making is administrative in character, there is at least the duty to act fairly, which usually merits the application of the essential standards of natural justice. 'Natural justice' includes that anyone likely to be affected by a proposed decision should be given an opportunity to make representations before the decision is taken, and that the decision-maker must not have a personal interest in the outcome.

- A local authority must act in good faith. Malice, vindictiveness or any similar emotion should have no part whatever in council decision-making.



## The European Convention on Human Rights

The European Convention on Human Rights was incorporated into NI law by the Human Rights Act 1998, which came into force in October 2000. It is essential that new councillors have a sound understanding of this significant legal change and how it affects your council, particularly in terms of your council's policies, procedures, practices and decision-making.

The following general outline of the key principles that apply under the Convention will not in itself protect councils from a human rights challenge. To secure full protection, a council must ensure its operations are compliant with Convention rights and responsibilities. This will require a detailed human rights risk assessment of every element of council operations, identifying and remedying potential incompatibilities. On a personal level, you may wish to request detailed human rights training to further your knowledge.

There are 3 categories of rights under the Convention:

- 1. Absolute rights. These cannot be limited or qualified in any way, and include: Article 3 right to freedom from torture, inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment; the Article 4 prohibition on slavery and enforced labour; and the Article 7 protection from retrospective criminal penalties.
- 2. Limited rights. Certain Convention rights are subject to explicit and clearly defined limitations or exceptions, e.g. the Article 5 right to liberty, which allows for deprivation of liberty within narrowly specified parameters.
- 3. Qualified rights. Interference with these rights is permissible only if it:
  - 1. has its basis in law
  - 2. is necessary in a democratic society, in that it
    - fulfils a pressing social need, and
    - pursues a legitimate aim, and
    - is proportionate to that aim
  - 3. is related to a permissible aim set out in the Article in question, such as the prevention of crime or the protection of public order or health.

Qualified rights are the most problematic, in that without the guidance of case law it can be difficult to be entirely confident whether an interference with a right is justifiable. Notably, councils are more likely to feel the impact of qualified rights than of any other category (for this reason we shall return to the concept of proportionality on pages Z, which is of central importance in this context). Qualified rights include: Article 8 right to respect for private and family life; Article 9 right to freedom of religion; Article 10 right to freedom of expression; Article 11 right to freedom of assembly and association; Article 1, Protocol 1 right to the peaceful enjoyment of property; Article 2, Protocol 1 right to education.

Convention rights are not to be subjected to a strict, legalistic interpretation as the Convention is a 'living instrument', intended to protect human rights and freedoms according to the prevailing standards of current European society, and must be given a broad interpretation. Today, these rights have to be viewed through modern eyes, and defined by the expectations of contemporary society.

The European Court of Human Rights puts heavy emphasis on pluralism, tolerance and broadmindedness, which frequently means that Convention rights are given a more liberal interpretation than is perhaps expected. As a result of this approach, Convention rights may not sit comfortably with the religious, moral, cultural and political views of a local electorate; however councils are nevertheless obliged to act compatibly. The liberal interpretative approach works only to broaden the scope of Convention rights; it cannot be used to expand the limitations imposed on those rights by the Convention itself, which will be construed narrowly.

The social values and expectations underpinning the Convention change with time and hence some parts may not accord with human rights in the future. It is therefore essential for councils to continually review policies and procedures for human rights compliance. It is suggested that a structured review should take place every two years, and that in the interim each council should respond on a case-by-case basis to difficulties that emerge from ongoing monitoring.

## The Human Rights Act 1998

The Human Rights Act contains many features that affect council operations.

The main features of the Act that affect local government are as follows:

- Nothing in the Act creates a criminal offence. The remedies provided are civil in nature.
- The Act 'brings rights home'. It is no longer necessary for an aggrieved party to pursue breaches of Convention rights before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg as disputes may be heard in the High Court in Belfast and local Magistrates', Crown and County Courts. Inevitably, more people will seek to rely on Convention rights, whether by instituting proceedings against councils, or by raising Convention rights as a defence to proceedings brought by councils. It is critical, then, that councils analyse and remedy potential breaches of Convention rights in through structured risk assessments.
- Section 2 of the Act provides that a court or tribunal determining a question that has arisen in connection with a Convention right must take into account various forms of decision made by Convention institutions so far as the court considers those decisions relevant.
- Section 3 states that, so far as it is possible to do so, primary legislation (e.g. acts of parliament) and secondary legislation (e.g. acts of the NI Assembly) must be read and given effect in a way which is compatible with the Convention rights secured by the Act. This does not affect the validity, continuing operation or enforcement of any incompatible primary legislation, or any incompatible subordinate legislation (if primary legislation prevents removal of the incompatibility). Nevertheless, a court may quash or disapply secondary legislation.
- Section 4 provides that where one of the higher courts (e.g. High Court, Court of Appeal, or House of Lords) is satisfied that a provision of primary or secondary legislation is incompatible with a

Convention right it may make a declaration of that incompatibility. A Section 4 declaration of incompatibility does not affect the validity, continuing operation or enforcement of the provision, and is not binding on the parties to the proceedings in which it is made, but is fairly likely to prompt remedial action by central government.

- Crucially, Section 6 makes it unlawful for a public authority (i.e. every council)- to act, or fail to act, in a way that is incompatible with Convention rights unless it is required to do so by primary or secondary legislation that is inevitably incompatible with those rights.

This provision covers all aspects of an authority's activities, including:

- Administrative procedures
- Decision-making
- Letting of council property
- Environmental health
- Building control
- Personnel issues
- Dealing with the public
- Compulsory acquisition
- Leisure and recreational provision
- Grant-aiding and making contributions
- Policy formulation / implementation
- Drafting byelaws, and other regulations
- Entertainment and other licensing
- Registration of births, deaths, marriages
- Prohibitions on public consumption of alcohol
- Enforcement practice and prosecutions
- Use of closed circuit television on council premises
- Controlling the content of films and advertisements shown at cinemas
- Concessionary provision of services and differential charging practices

Full human rights risk assessment has been adopted by a number of councils in Northern Ireland, which identified significant human rights issues under each of the activities listed above, and remedial action has been taken.

- Section 7 entitles a person who claims that a public authority has acted, or proposes to act, in a way which is made unlawful by Section 6 to bring legal proceedings against that authority or to rely on the Convention right(s) concerned in any legal proceedings if, that person is, or would be, a victim of the

unlawful act in question.

- If proceedings are brought on an application for judicial review, the applicant is to be taken to have a sufficient interest in relation to the unlawful act if he or she is, or would be, a victim of that act. A victim is anyone directly affected or at risk of being directly affected by the act, or failure to act in question. Companies can be victims as well as individuals. Bodies such as interest groups or trade unions cannot bring proceedings unless they are themselves victims, though they can of course lend legal, financial or other support to a victim. Governmental bodies such as councils cannot be victims.
- Any proceedings instituted under Section 7 must be brought within one year after the date on which the act complained of took place, or within a longer period the court or tribunal hearing the proceedings considers equitable according to circumstances.
- Section 8 provides for the award of damages for acts made unlawful by Section 6 in addition to the other remedies open to the courts.

## Interference with Human Rights

There must be a reasonable relationship of proportionality between the means employed and the legitimate objectives pursued by any interference with a Convention right. Crudely, this principle denotes that the end must justify the means. An interference with a Convention right must meet the objective relied on but must not go beyond that objective, nor may it be based on irrational considerations, be arbitrary or unfair, or have too severe an impact on an individual or group of individuals.

In deciding whether an interference with a Convention right is proportionate, the courts should apply 5 tests teased out by the European Court of Human Rights:

1. The Balancing Test. This involves striking a 'fair balance' between the importance of the objective to be attained by the interference against the infringement of individual rights which that interference involves. The objective may not be sufficiently important to justify the

interference, or the impact on the individual concerned may be too severe.

2. The 'Relevant and Sufficient Reasons' Test. An interference is disproportionate if it is not supported by relevant, and sufficient, reasons.
3. The Test of Careful Design. An interference will be disproportionate if it is too broad in scope, effect or duration.
4. The 'Essence of the Right' Test. The greater the extent to which an interference impairs the essence of the Convention right concerned, the more likely it is that that interference will be disproportionate.
5. The Evidential Test. For an interference to be proportionate, the public authority imposing it must produce hard evidence of the pressing social need which is advanced as justification of that interference.

The concept of proportionality goes beyond the concept of "Wednesbury unreasonableness", familiar to many experienced councillors, and involves going further into the substantive merits of an issue than courts have traditionally been prepared to go.

## Margin of Appreciation

A certain amount of discretion, known as the 'margin of appreciation', is permitted to domestic authorities by the European Court of Human Rights in relation to those Convention rights which require striking a balance between the rights of the community and the rights of the individual.

The margin stems from a general reluctance on the part of the European Court of Human Rights to substitute its own assessment for that of domestic authorities who, by reason of their direct and continuous contact with the community, are in principle better placed than an international court to evaluate local conditions, yet the margin of appreciation is accompanied by European supervision.

There is no uniform margin of appreciation that can be applied, as it varies according to:

- circumstances;
- subject matter and its background;
- nature of the Convention right in issue;
- importance of the Convention right in issue for the individual;
- extent to which the issue requires consideration of social, economic or political factors;
- extent to which the decision-taker has special expertise;
- existence or otherwise of common ground between the laws of the contracting states.

There is a wider margin of appreciation allowed in relation to matters concerning religion, morals or personal beliefs than in those concerning politics or the public interest. Generally, even where the European Court of Human Rights considers it appropriate to allow a margin of appreciation, it must still meet its responsibility to give a judgment consistent with the Convention, having regard particularly to the test of proportionality.

Just as there are circumstances in which an international court will recognise that national institutions are better placed to assess societal needs and make difficult choices between competing considerations, so national courts are likely to accept that in some circumstances the legislature and executive are better placed to perform those functions.

Until the point is determined by our courts, it is impossible to be sure how far this analogous margin of appreciation will be given to local government. A tentative assessment is that a margin of appreciation will probably be given to councils, but that it will be less generous than that accorded to central government, because of the smaller focus and more restricted powers of councils.

## European Human Rights Law and Discrimination

Article 14 provides that people must be able to enjoy the rights and freedoms protected by the Convention without discrimination on any ground, such as:

- sex;                      ● race;                      ● colour;
- language;              ● religion;                  ● property;

- national or social origin;              ● birth;
- political or other opinion;
- association with a national minority;
- or other status.

The phrase 'or other status' has been interpreted by Convention institutions to include sexual orientation, marital status, illegitimacy, status as a trade union member, professional status, military status and conscientious objection.

There will be discrimination for the purposes of Article 14 where:

- a person is treated differently, on a prohibited ground, from other people in a similar, or analogous, situation; and
- where that differential treatment has no reasonable and objective justification.

The concept of discrimination includes indirect discrimination; that is, discrimination which results from the general application of a rule or practice which has a disproportionate and unjustified adverse impact on members of a particular group or minority.

For a suggested justification to be 'reasonable and objective' it must be demonstrated that the difference in treatment pursues a legitimate aim, and that there is a reasonable relationship of proportionality between the means employed and the aim served.

The European Court of Human Rights has accepted that the following are examples of legitimate aims for the purposes of Article 14:

- supporting and encouraging the traditional family;
- protecting children's health and rights;
- protecting the morals and rights of others;
- protecting the labour market;
- developing linguistic unity.

A margin of appreciation is permitted in relation to the question of justification (depending on circumstances), the subject matter, the case background, and whether there is a common standard within the contracting states. That said, discrimination on grounds such as sex, illegitimacy, nationality and race will be viewed as particularly serious and will require weighty justification.



## 2. Elected Member Support



## 2 Elected Member Support

This chapter outlines the main sources of financial, advisory and information support available to councillors as they undertake their duties.

### Starting out

Getting to grips with your new role as an elected member may be difficult to begin with and different councils will use various systems to support you during your induction. If you are in a political party, there may also be ways in which new members can get together with party colleagues to learn from their experiences. You should be aware, however, that it could take a considerable length of time for you to come to terms with your role and build up a base of local government knowledge, so you should not hesitate to approach your council's officers and your elected member colleagues for help.

Your role as a councillor will develop according to your personal work style and the needs of your particular DEA; however, certain duties will be common to all elected members. The Induction Checklist, on page X at the back of this chapter, has been designed to ensure that you are equipped with the basic practical tools required to begin your new role.

### Financial support

There are four types of allowance paid to councillors in Northern Ireland, as determined by the Department of the Environment (DoE) Local Government Division (the figures provided are due to be reviewed in summer 2005):

**1. Basic allowance:** Payable to all councillors in recognition of the time and expense commitment expected of them, and intended to cover incidental costs. Currently this figure cannot exceed £4,341 per councillor per annum.

**2. Attendance allowance:** Payable for those approved duties included in a council's scheme of allowances. This is paid at the flat rate of £22 for any 24-hour period in which you attend a meeting, regardless of how many additional meetings you attend within the same day.

**3. Special responsibility allowance:** Payable to Chairmen of Council Standing and other committees or those special responsibilities included in a council's scheme of allowances, within maximum levels determined by the DoE. You should contact your Member Services officer, Finance Director or the relevant outside body to establish the rate of payment that you are likely to receive. The total for apportionment to committee chairmen for a district council is related to population and shall not exceed:

Population	Total per council	Maximum payable to individual cllr
Exceeding 200,000	£43,412	One fifth of the amount in column two
100,001 - 200,000	£32,560	
50,000 - 100,000	£16,279	
Not exceeding 50,000	£10,854	

### 4. Travel and subsistence allowance:

These allowances are a way of compensating councillors for expenditure necessarily incurred when performing an approved duty. You should contact your Member Services team or

Finance Director to discover the rate of payment that you are likely to receive.

Your council will provide an official form for claiming allowances and it is your responsibility to make claims. Completing the claim involves a declaration that you have not made, and will not make, any claim for allowances from any other body for the same duty and that the amount claimed is strictly in accordance with the law. Claims for attendance allowance must be submitted within three months from the date on which the approved duty was performed, otherwise payment cannot be made.

Some councils publish details of payments made to councillors on their websites.

To find out whether your receipt of allowances affects your entitlements to benefits or taxation, you can get advice from the Department of Social Development, a Citizens Advice Bureau or the Tax Office.

The elected members' allowances system is currently under review. The proposed new system suggests the abolition of attendance allowance, to be replaced by a flat rate basic allowance or higher basic allowances linked to council population to recognise greater time commitment in larger council areas. Alternatively, an independent panel may be appointed to allocate member allowances.

## Right to release from Employment

An employer is required to permit an employee, where he or she is a member of a district council, to take time off during working hours for the purpose of performing duties as a councillor. The duties for which time off work may be taken are attendance at council or committee meetings and other approved duties.

The amount of time off which an employee may take must be reasonable in all the circumstances, having regard to:

- How much time is required for the performance of council duties
- How much time he or she has already been allowed off for council / trade union work
- The circumstances of his or her employer's business and the effect

which his or her absence may have on it

For further information please access the following web page:

**[www.northernireland-legislation.hmso.gov.uk/legislation/northernireland/nisr/](http://www.northernireland-legislation.hmso.gov.uk/legislation/northernireland/nisr/)**

## Supporting Organisations

A number of organisations exist to support elected members, provide impartial advice and facilitate cross-council networking and policy-making. The main functions of these organisations are explained in the information that follows:

### Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)

NILGA, established in October 2001, represents the 'Voice of Local Government' in Northern Ireland and has formed effective relationships with central government, the Society of Local Authorities' Chief Executives (SOLACE), officer networks, and other key agencies in the public, voluntary and private sectors. NILGA has taken a proactive approach to policy development in Northern Ireland, dealing with issues such as waste management, the Review of Public Administration (RPA), water charges, rating reform and the impact of the Sellafield nuclear plant.

NILGA's full membership of 156 councillors meets on a bi-monthly basis, and a 33-member executive committee, including four office bearers and the association's President, meets monthly to discuss topical issues.

### NILGA's objectives are:

- To represent the interests of local authorities
- To provide a forum for discussion of local government issues
- To provide advice, assistance and services to councils as required
- To formulate sound policies for the development of local government and its management
- To develop a strong profile for NILGA and local government
- To maximise staff effectiveness and growth

The three main areas of NILGA's work are:

- **Developing government relations:** NILGA is playing a key role as an interface between central and local government on matters of policy, legislation, regulation, roles and functions as the association consults with councils and provides two-way communication between the levels of government. The association endeavours to represent councils equally and fairly on matters of common interest.
- **Policy and legislation:** Local government policy is developed through a range of mechanisms including working groups, but is sanctioned at members' meetings whereby all councils are represented. In terms of legislation, NILGA ensures that local government policy objectives are presented during the development of legislation proposals.
- **Guidance:** NILGA is responsible for providing advice to councils on matters associated with intergovernmental relations, policy and legislation. This advice is provided through reports and publications, general correspondence and seminars. The Chief Executive and officers of the association also attend council and regional meetings when requested.

In terms of NILGA's constitution, each council is entitled to appoint between three and nine representatives to serve on NILGA, depending on the population of each council area. Belfast, as the council with the greatest population, is entitled to 20 representatives. No debate is permitted at NILGA meetings on matters unrelated to local government functions. This provision was introduced into NILGA's constitution to prevent discussion of contentious political issues.

NILGA appoints representatives, or submits nominations for appointments, to various statutory bodies and voluntary organisations such as the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, and LACORS (see Reference Section (i) for abbreviations). The office bearers of NILGA are appointed as

representatives of each political party holding six full membership seats. The Chair and Vice-chair of each working group are determined using the d'Hondt system.

Current policy working groups at NILGA include:

- **Agriculture and Rural Affairs Working Group**, which deals with such issues directly affecting councils. As Northern Ireland is largely rural, agriculture comprises the major economic activity in a number of council areas.
- **E-Government Working Group**, which meets to develop an e-government vision and first steps toward an implementation strategy for local government, supported by the central government e-Government unit.
- **Sellafield Working Group**, which has visited Sellafield to recommend action and recently initiated an arrangement where biannual forum meetings are held between the NILGA working group and BNFL staff. The group widened its remit to include other radiological issues, and produced a 'Radiation Policy' and a 'Radiation Handbook for Councillors'.
- **Review of Public Administration (RPA) Working Group**, which brings the sector together to discuss the Review's implications, and focuses on how central and local government should engage within the Northern Ireland context. A paper on 'Policy Capacity' has been produced by NILGA to stimulate discussion on this issue. NILGA are currently in discussion with the direct rule Ministers as to how this work can be carried forward.
- **Living More Sustainably (LMS) Working Group**, which lobbies government for the introduction of the Power of Well-being to NI, already available to local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales, to enable a successful community planning process in the context of RPA. The LMS group recently partnered LACORS, the Food Standards Agency (NI), the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and Sustainable NI in the production of "Food: the local vision", and produced a model 'Energy Policy' for councils.
- **Northern Ireland Strategic Intergovernmental Waste Partnership**,



which acts as a forum for discussion between local and central government on waste issues. The meetings allow the 3 waste groups to discuss shared concerns, and develop ways forward. Currently, the working group meets monthly to discuss key issues including: funding issues, planning issues, licensing fees and charges, closure of landfill sites, central-local relations and communication on waste issues.

The Review of Public Administration (RPA) team's statement that 'the existence of a strong local government association appears to be a significant feature in countries where local government influence is greatest', emphasises the importance of retaining and developing a strong association for the sector. There are three key ways in which the existence of a local government association benefits individual councils:

## 1. Policy.

The local government sector in NI is weak compared to other jurisdictions, is not well supported by central government and there is no policy infrastructure. NILGA has provided and / or facilitated;

- Increased access to Ministers
- A forum for debate and research (the opportunity to collate opinion)
- Policy co-ordination (RPA, Water, Rating Review, Community Planning, Power of Well-being, Fire Authority etc.)
- A strong lobbying voice
- A body which can negotiate on behalf of the sector
- Increased ability to interact in National and European forums

## 2. Development for the sector.

NILGA can take a strategic overview of development needs:

- Lobbying for better policy (Power of Well-being, e-Government etc)
- Publication of Good Practice special, newsletters and website
- Pressing for twin-track approach i RPA, requesting additional resource for the sector (e.g. member development)
- Using other areas as models for development
- Increased profile for the sector

## 3. Opportunity to draw down resources.

NILGA has campaigned for and achieved resources for the sector in areas such as:

- Waste
- Sponsorship
- EU Technical Assistance
- Funding for consultation events
- Assembly secondment
- Arts Council and e-Government Projects

For the purposes of industrial relations' legislation NILGA is also a registered employers' organisation, administering the Employers' Sides of the two Joint Councils for local government employees in Northern Ireland.

**Contact:** NILGA, Philip House,  
123 York Street,  
BELFAST, BT15 1AB

**Tel:** 028 90 24 9286

**Fax:** 028 90 23 3328

**Email:** [office@nilga.org](mailto:office@nilga.org)

**Website:** [www.nilga.org](http://www.nilga.org)

## National Association of Councillors (NAC)

The National Association of Councillors is a recognised body within local government. The Association's remit includes all aspects of councillors' work and also addresses councillors' welfare issues such as state benefits and allowances for councillors.

Councillors from all parties in Northern Ireland are members of the association and collectively they work for the improvement of local government and the local communities they represent. The NAC has close links with other council members throughout the UK and Ireland. The Secretary of the NAC in Northern Ireland is Councillor Ronnie Ferguson.

**Contact:** Cllr R Ferguson,  
Ards Borough Council,  
1 Church Street,  
Newtownards, BT23 4AP

**Tel:** 028 9182 4000

**Fax:** 028 9181 9628

**Email:** [councillor.ronaldferguson@ards-council.gov.uk](mailto:councillor.ronaldferguson@ards-council.gov.uk)

## Information Sources

This section is a directory of valuable hard copy and electronic information sources to which you can refer, listed under various topic headings. In addition to searching these sources for specific pieces of information, you should also consider reviewing them at your leisure as part of your ongoing development to assess and note their value to you personally, e.g. in relation to the outside bodies to which you have been specifically nominated to represent your council, or with regard to your own particular areas of interest.

### 26 District Councils in Northern Ireland (in alphabetical order):

<a href="http://www.antrim.gov.uk">www.antrim.gov.uk</a>	Antrim Borough Council
<a href="http://www.ards-council.gov.uk">www.ards-council.gov.uk</a>	Ards Borough Council
<a href="http://www.armagh.gov.uk">www.armagh.gov.uk</a>	Armagh City and District Council
<a href="http://www.ballymena.gov.uk">www.ballymena.gov.uk</a>	Ballymena Borough Council
<a href="http://www.ballymoney.gov.uk">www.ballymoney.gov.uk</a>	Ballymoney Borough Council
<a href="http://www.banbridge.gov.uk">www.banbridge.gov.uk</a>	Banbridge District Council
<a href="http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk">www.belfastcity.gov.uk</a>	Belfast City Council
<a href="http://www.carrickfergus.org">www.carrickfergus.org</a>	Carrickfergus Borough Council
<a href="http://www.castlereagh.gov.uk">www.castlereagh.gov.uk</a>	Castlereagh Borough Council
<a href="http://www.colerainebc.gov.uk">www.colerainebc.gov.uk</a>	Coleraine Borough Council
<a href="http://www.cookstown.gov.uk">www.cookstown.gov.uk</a>	Cookstown Borough Council
<a href="http://www.craigavon.gov.uk">www.craigavon.gov.uk</a>	Craigavon Borough Council
<a href="http://www.derrycity.gov.uk">www.derrycity.gov.uk</a>	Derry City Council
<a href="http://www.downdc.gov.uk">www.downdc.gov.uk</a>	Down District Council
<a href="http://www.dungannon.gov.uk">www.dungannon.gov.uk</a>	Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council
<a href="http://www.fermanagh.gov.uk">www.fermanagh.gov.uk</a>	Fermanagh District Council
<a href="http://www.larne.gov.uk">www.larne.gov.uk</a>	Larne Borough Council
<a href="http://www.limavady.gov.uk">www.limavady.gov.uk</a>	Limavady Borough Council
<a href="http://www.lisburncity.gov.uk">www.lisburncity.gov.uk</a>	Lisburn City Council
<a href="http://www.magherafelt.gov.uk">www.magherafelt.gov.uk</a>	Magherafelt District Council
<a href="http://www.moyle-council.org">www.moyle-council.org</a>	Moyle District Council
<a href="http://www.newryandmourne.gov.uk">www.newryandmourne.gov.uk</a>	Newry and Mourne District Council
<a href="http://www.newtownabbey.gov.uk">www.newtownabbey.gov.uk</a>	Newtownabbey Borough Council
<a href="http://www.northdown.gov.uk">www.northdown.gov.uk</a>	North Down Borough Council
<a href="http://www.omagh.gov.uk">www.omagh.gov.uk</a>	Omagh District Council
<a href="http://www.strabanedc.com">www.strabanedc.com</a>	Strabane District Council

## General Local Government Information and Statistics

### United Kingdom and regional information

<a href="http://www.lgiu.gov.uk">www.lgiu.gov.uk</a>	Local Government Information Unit
<a href="http://www.info4local.gov.uk">www.info4local.gov.uk</a>	register free to receive emails from central government
regarding items of interest to councils	
<a href="http://www.ukonline.gov.uk">www.ukonline.gov.uk</a>	UK Government online
<a href="http://www.lg-employers.gov.uk">www.lg-employers.gov.uk</a>	Local Government Employers' Organisation
<a href="http://www.statistics.gov.uk">www.statistics.gov.uk</a>	National Statistics online-home of official UK statistics
<a href="http://www.esrc.ac.uk">www.esrc.ac.uk</a>	Economic and Social Research Council
<a href="http://www.electoralcommission.gov.uk">www.electoralcommission.gov.uk</a>	Electoral Commission
<a href="http://www.solace.org.uk">www.solace.org.uk</a>	SOLACE

## Republic of Ireland only

[www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie)  
[www.environ.ie](http://www.environ.ie)

Central Statistics Office  
Dept of Environment, Heritage and Local Government

## Northern Ireland only

[www.nisra.gov.uk](http://www.nisra.gov.uk)  
[www.qub.ac.uk/nierc/](http://www.qub.ac.uk/nierc/)

NI Statistics and Research Agency  
NI Economic Council and NI Economic Research Centre  
[currently merging to form new Economic Research  
Institute of NI, website under construction]

[www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)  
[www.humanrightsnri.gov.uk](http://www.humanrightsnri.gov.uk)  
[www.gccni.org.uk](http://www.gccni.org.uk)  
[www.lgsc.org.uk](http://www.lgsc.org.uk)  
[www.onlineni.net](http://www.onlineni.net)  
[www.cituni.gov.uk](http://www.cituni.gov.uk)

Equality Commission  
Human Rights Commission  
General Consumer Council  
Local Government Staff Commission  
Online NI  
OFMDFM e-Government Unit

## European and international sources

[www.lgib.gov.uk](http://www.lgib.gov.uk)

Local Government International Bureau

## Legislation and Parliamentary Affairs

[www.niassembly.gov.uk](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk)  
[www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk)  
[www.irlgov.ie/oireachtas/frame.htm](http://www.irlgov.ie/oireachtas/frame.htm)  
[www.scotland-legislation.hmso.gov.uk](http://www.scotland-legislation.hmso.gov.uk)  
[www.scottish.parliament.uk](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk)  
[www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk)

NI Assembly  
UK legislation  
ROI legislation and parliament  
Scottish legislation  
Scottish parliament  
National Assembly for Wales

## National and Regional Local Government Associations

[www.nilga.org](http://www.nilga.org)  
[www.councillors.ie](http://www.councillors.ie)  
[www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk)  
[www.cosla.gov.uk](http://www.cosla.gov.uk)  
[www.wlga.gov.uk](http://www.wlga.gov.uk)

Northern Ireland Local Government Association  
General Council of County Councils (ROI)  
Local Government Association (England)  
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities  
Welsh Local Government Association

## Elected Member Development

[www.idea.gov.uk](http://www.idea.gov.uk)  
[www.lgiu.gov.uk](http://www.lgiu.gov.uk)

Improvement and Development Agency  
Local Government Information Unit

## Policy and Decision-Making

A Practical Guide to Policy Making in Northern Ireland, OFMDFM, NICS  
Better Policy-Making, Centre for Management and Policy Studies in the Cabinet Office (CMPS)  
Delivering Better Policy in the Scottish Executive, Scottish Executive, 2002

[www.information.wales.gov.uk](http://www.information.wales.gov.uk)  
[www.foresight.gov.uk](http://www.foresight.gov.uk)  
[www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)

Policy Gateway website, National Assembly for Wales  
Foresight Programme  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office, EU Policy-making

## European Funding

<a href="http://www.europe-dfpni.gov.uk">www.europe-dfpni.gov.uk</a>	Dept of Finance and Personnel, European Division
<a href="http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/urb-reg/">www.dsdni.gov.uk/urb-reg/</a>	Dept of Social Development
<a href="http://www.equalni.org">www.equalni.org</a>	Equal NI
<a href="http://www.cec.org.uk/ni">www.cec.org.uk/ni</a>	European Commission Office in NI
<a href="http://www.europa.eu.int/regional_policy/">www.europa.eu.int/regional_policy /</a>	European Commission, DG Regional Policy
<a href="http://www.interregiii.org.uk/">http://www.interregiii.org.uk/</a>	Interreg IIIA
<a href="http://www.interreg-atlantique.org/">http://www.interreg-atlantique.org/</a>	Interreg IIIB
<a href="http://www.interreg3c.net/web/west_en">http://www.interreg3c.net/web/west_en</a>	Interreg IIIC
<a href="http://www.proteus-ni.org">www.proteus-ni.org</a>	Proteus
<a href="http://www.seupb.org">www.seupb.org</a>	Special EU Programmes Body

## Central Government Institutions and Processes

McQuade, Owen and Joanne Fagan, ed. The Governance of Northern Ireland:  
A Comprehensive Guide to the Institutions and Processes of Government in Northern Ireland,  
Moira, Lagan Consulting, 2002. ISBN: 0-9537672-6-4

NI Local Government- Functions, Contacts and Internal Stakeholders

McKernan, Michael, ed. Northern Ireland Local Government Handbook 2004 / 05:

A Comprehensive Guide to Local Government in Northern Ireland, Lisburn, Lagan Consulting,  
2004. ISBN: 0-9546284-1-1

(Copies of this publication should be available from your localcouncil)



## Induction Checklist

Tick off the tasks below as you do them (or cross off those that do not apply), and use the blank sections provided to include notes on the information relevant to your own council. Where space has not been provided below in the check box, you are advised to use the section at the back of the binder to retain any larger documents, such as council meeting schedules, which you find useful to refer to on a regular basis.

### Signing up

- ☐ I have signed my acceptance of office
- ☐ I have completed the council's Declaration of Interests form
- ☐ I have read and signed up to the council's Code of Conduct for members
- ☐ I have informed the council about any special needs with which they can assist me in my role

### Finding my feet

I have been supplied with:

- ☐ A security pass
- ☐ Details of the opening and / or operating hours of the main council offices and other departments

The opening hours for the main council building are:

- ☐ A map outlining the layout of the main council offices and council's buildings

I can find the following:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Council chamber           | <input type="checkbox"/> Members' Services department            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chief Executives' office  | <input type="checkbox"/> Pigeonholes for councillors' post       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Library or reference area | <input type="checkbox"/> Copies of local and national newspapers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Refreshments              | <input type="checkbox"/> Vehicle parking facilities              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Members' room             | <input type="checkbox"/> Office equipment for members' use:      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Restrooms and fire exits  | copiers, phones, faxes,  |
|  | computers, printers  |

### Basic information

I have obtained copies of:

- ☐ The council's Member Allowance scheme and claim forms

Claim forms should be submitted to:

The date that claims forms should be submitted by is:

- ☐ A list of other council members, their DEAs and political affiliation
- ☐ A list of services which the council is responsible for
- ☐ Central council strategy documents including the Corporate Plan, Best Value Strategy, Annual Report etc
- ☐ An organisation chart of the council's internal management
- ☐ A list of senior council officers, their job titles and phone and email contact details
- ☐ A schedule of full council meetings, committee meetings and group meetings or a council diary

I am a member of the following council committees or panels:

I have been appointed to represent the council on the following outside bodies:

## Settling in

- ☐ I have been shown how to operate the members' office equipment and supplied with all relevant electronic passwords or codes required
- ☐ I know who to contact to get technical assistance
- ☐ I have obtained a map of the council area, identifying where local health and other public services are located
- ☐ I have obtained information on my council area including statistics, profile and problems

## Council provisions for members

I have investigated whether my council can provide members with:

- ☐ Meeting rooms for conducting council business
- ☐ A council email address
- ☐ Computer and / or office equipment to carry out council business at home
- ☐ Electronic access to the council's computer or intranet systems and files
- ☐ An official publicity photograph
- ☐ A press-cutting service
- ☐ Stationery
- ☐ Delivery of post to members' home addresses
- ☐ Secretarial or casework support
- ☐ A role profile for elected members
- ☐ A 'buddying' or mentoring scheme for new members

The background of the slide features a dark, teal-toned image. In the foreground, there is a close-up of a compass face with a white dial and black markings for cardinal and ordinal directions (N, NE, E, SE, S, SW, W, NW) and degrees. A compass needle is visible, pointing towards the North. In the background, a larger, fainter compass rose is visible, creating a layered effect.

## 3. Council Functions

## 3. Council Functions

This chapter is designed to answer some of your questions about how local government operates.

### Local government overview

It is often difficult to work out how local government interacts and works in tandem with the other forms of public administration in Northern Ireland. You should find some of the answers to basic questions about the functions of councils below.

### How does local government function in its wider context?

The 26 district councils form Northern Ireland's third tier of government, below Westminster and the devolved government at Stormont. Councils are involved in policy and decision-making and the direct delivery of local services. Citizens within each of the 101 District Electoral Areas (DEAs) in Northern Ireland elect councillors to constitute their local council. A Local Government District (LGD) is the entire area controlled by a district council.

### How often are councillors elected?

Local government elections take place on the third Wednesday in May every four years. (The precise timing may be changed by legislation as in 2005). Councillors are elected by proportional representation using the single transferable vote system, with each DEA forming a multi-seat constituency.

### How are council boundaries decided?

Each DEA comprises a number of wards whose boundaries are reviewed every 10-15 years by the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner. The District Electoral Commissioner, who is appointed by the Secretary of State, recommends boundaries of DEAs. Commissioners try to avoid dividing wards, etc between parliamentary constituencies, as they often represent local communities, although this is sometimes inevitable.

### How are councils categorised?

Under the provisions of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972, all 26 councils are designated as 'district councils' but the Act provided for the granting of city or borough status in certain circumstances. The former city status of Belfast and Derry was maintained and is reflected in the names of the councils. Armagh, Lisburn have since been conferred with city status and have changed their council names accordingly. The city status conferred on Newry has not resulted in a name change. 13 other councils have obtained borough status, namely Antrim, Ards, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Carrickfergus, Castlereagh, Coleraine, Craigavon, Dungannon, Larne, Limavady, Newtownabbey and North Down.

### How do city and borough councils differ from district councils?

Where a council has City or Borough status it has two other ceremonial privileges. It may designate up to one quarter of its members as aldermen and confer the freedom of the City or Borough on distinguished individuals or groups. City and borough councils appoint a Mayor and Deputy Mayor while district councils appoint a Chairman and Vice-Chairman. Belfast is unique in appointing a Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor.

### How was the present system of local government formed?

The NI local government system dates from the 1970s, when it was decided to reorganise the administration of key services at local level. In response to the Macrory Report, the Local Government (NI) Act 1972 sought to address claims of political bias in various areas of service provision. The roles and responsibilities of councils changed, notably in education and health which are administered by area boards of appointed members and are not directly accountable to councils. Housing provision had already been transferred to the Housing Executive in 1970.



## The functions of local government in Northern Ireland

There is a statutory basis in everything a council does, meaning that no council can exercise any function without holding the appropriate authority in law. If a council acts without authority its decisions or expenditure may be held to be ultra vires, meaning “outside the powers” of the council.

The roles and functions of councils, established in the Local Government Act 1972 and in other legislation, falls into three types:

- Direct - councils are responsible for the provision and management of services
- Representative - council nominees sit on statutory bodies
- Consultative - councils reflect community views in the operation of range of statutory bodies, community concerns or give views on proposed admin decisions

Most councils carry out the functions outlined below. However, not every council will have the entire range of services, depending upon its geographical location and size:

### Direct services:

- Advice and information
- Arts and entertainment
- Building regulations
- Burial grounds and crematoria
- Civic ceremonials
- Community services
- Dog control
- Economic development
- Harbours
- Health inspection
- Leisure and community centres
- Licensing
- Markets and fairs
- Museums and art galleries
- Parks and open spaces
- Pollution control
- Public conveniences
- Recreation grounds and services
- Refuse collection and disposal
- Street naming and cleansing
- Tourism development
- Consumer Safety
- Community Relations
- Food Standards
- War Memorials

### Representative role:

- Education and Library Boards
- Health and Social Services Councils
- Health and Social Services Boards
- District Policing Partnerships
- Local Strategy Partnerships
- Community Safety Partnerships

### Consultative role:

- |         |                              |
|---------|------------------------------|
| ■ Water | ■ Infrastructure / utilities |
| ■ Roads | ■ Planning                   |

The Northern Ireland Office has requested councils to develop Community Safety Strategies and to work with the police on issues such as drug and alcohol abuse and the provision of youth clubs and other social amenities to reduce the potential for crime. Local councils also have a central role in the District Policing Partnerships and Emergency Planning will shortly be introduced as an additional responsibility.

Councils play a key role in dispensing EU Peace and Reconciliation Funds within Local Strategy Partnerships (LSPs).

There is an increasing emphasis on improving local environmental performance, particularly in the area of waste management in the context of diminishing landfill capacity and restrictions on construction of new incineration plants. Many councils have initiated programmes to reduce overall energy consumption and to meet a growing proportion of their energy requirements from renewable sources of energy such as wind and solar power.

## How a Council Works

This section examines the ways in which councils make decisions, delegate work to committees and organise meetings. Council operations vary, but most adhere to the general structure outlined overleaf. A list of terms used in committee meetings is provided at the end of the chapter.

## The Committee System

Council activities and formal decision-making are conducted by the elected members in the council chamber. Most councils, however, pass work to a series of

committees to which the elected members are appointed. Senior officers work closely with the councillors on the relevant committees.

In general, committees can be categorised as follows:

- **Central Committee** - takes an overall view of policies and allocates resources. For example the Finance and General Purposes or Policy and Resources Committee
- **Functional Committee** – is responsible for groups of related services or functions e.g. Leisure or Environmental Services etc
- **Joint Committee** – is a partnership with other district councils dealing with issues such as tourism, where there is an obvious overlap with adjacent council areas.

Committees may also appoint sub-committees or working groups to carry out urgent or specific tasks within a particular timeframe.

Elections for offices such as Chairman or Mayor and the determination of membership of the various committees are held at the annual meeting. The size of committees varies between councils; some committees have all councillors as members while others consist of a smaller number from the full council. Some councils do not have a formal committee system and transact their business in full council meetings.

Normally the council considers reports or minutes from committees as part of the full council agenda. This allows the council to keep up to date with the committee's actions and to deal with items requiring full council approval.

Councils must have an annual meeting (normally held in June), where it is customary to appoint committee members and the Chairman or Mayor for the ensuing year. In an election year the annual meeting must be held within 21 days immediately following the Election Day. Committee Chairs are appointed at the first meeting of the committee after the Annual Meeting.

## Meetings

Outlined below is some basic information and terminology about the use of standard procedures applied to council meetings. Council agendas provide advance notice of the date, time and place of meetings and the business to be transacted. In the case of the council meeting there is a period of at least three days' statutory notice.

The law requires that "a summons to attend the meeting, specifying the business proposed to be transacted thereat and signed by the clerk of the council, shall be left at or sent by ordinary post to the usual place of residence of every councillor."

Items on a full council meeting's agenda may include:

- **Routine and recurring items** - e.g. signing the minutes of the previous meeting or approving accounts for payment
- **Business carried over from the previous meeting** - often listed as "matters arising", and used in practice for less important or unexpected matters
- **Periodically recurring business** - is automatically programmed in as items arise for consideration at regular intervals during the year, e.g. consideration of expenditure estimates and quarterly reports
- **New Business** - comes from correspondence, officers' reports, committee reports, or items raised by council members themselves.

There is no rule about the order of business, but each committee will have its own practice and councils may follow advice contained in "Model Standing Orders" issued by the Department of the Environment.

## Quorum

In general, no business may be transacted at a council meeting unless at least one quarter of the whole number of members is present.

## The Chair

The role of the Chair of the committee or council is to regulate the meeting by ensuring the proceedings are properly conducted according to law and according to the Standing Orders. He or she must also ensure that all shades of opinion are given a fair hearing and the wishes of the majority are made known. Councillors should address all remarks to the Chair when they wish to speak.

## Standing Orders

These are adopted in most councils and set out the rules for conducting business in the council and committees, for example: -

- Timing and frequency of meetings
- Committee appointments
- Quorum required (i.e. the minimum number of councillors needed to constitute a meeting which has the authority to make decisions)
- Rules of debate e.g. how many times a member may speak, the right of reply, the power of the Chair, procedures to move or withdraw motions, voting, etc
- Powers and authority of the Chair
- Information about procedures to deal with tenders, contracts, etc.

Standing Orders vary between councils as each has the power to make, change or revoke its own Standing Orders via a formal procedure that usually requires a special resolution with advance notice. No notice is required to suspend a Standing Order. If Standing Orders are used by the Chair as a means of bringing order and discipline to a meeting, a councillor is expected to comply. By not observing the rules, a councillor can be called to order by the Chair who, in extreme circumstances and with the agreement of the meeting, can ask him or her to leave.

## Points of Order

The phrase "Point of Order" is often used to interrupt a discussion if a member believes Standing Orders are not being followed or that he or she is being misunderstood or misrepresented. The member must quote the Standing Order that he or she believes has

been breached. The interrupted speaker is expected to give way until the Chair rules on the point.

## Motions and Resolutions

The council and its committees take decisions by considering and voting on motions which, if they are approved by a majority, become resolutions.

A motion is a proposal put forward by a member in the hope that there will be enough support at the meeting for it to be adopted as a decision of the council or committee. The general practice is that the Proposer requires a Secunder to support general discussion of the motion at the meeting. Committees are often less formal than council meetings as members are usually permitted to remain seated, whereas at a council meeting the member must stand and address the chair.

## Amendments

An amendment is a modification of the wording of a proposal; it must not be a new proposal different in substance from the original motion or the opposite of the proposal. The amendment also requires a Secunder and should be proposed before the original proposal is put to the vote.

The Chair deals with each amendment separately before dealing with the original proposal in order to avoid confusion. If an amendment is accepted by the meeting, the original motion is changed and put before the meeting as the "substantive" motion.

## Adopting Committee Reports

The Chair of the committee concerned is usually responsible for ensuring that the council formally adopts committee reports or minutes. Amending or rejecting this proposal may be inappropriate, leaving three courses of action:

- Suggest an alternative course of action to that recommended by the committee
- Refer the item back to the committee
- Decide that no further action is taken.

## Notice of Motion

Standing Orders usually provide a way for a member to submit a motion in his or her own name to the council meeting as distinct from the report of a committee. Normally such a motion would be submitted in writing to the Chief Executive, within a specified period.

## Interruptive or Closure Motions

A discussion can be interrupted to bring consideration of a matter to an end, often due to the debate being prolonged unnecessarily or because of pressure of time. Provided the Chair is satisfied that the business has been aired sufficiently, any member can intervene with motions commonly called “interruptive” or “closure” motions asking, for example, that a “question be now put” for a matter to be quickly voted upon, or for the meeting to “proceed to the next business”, or be adjourned due to time constraints. Standing Orders usually have specific rules to deal with this type of motion.

## Voting

The law provides that councils must reach a decision on any matter by majority of those present and voting via a show of hands (unless otherwise resolved by the council). A member must be present in order to vote, as there is no provision for proxy voting. Although there must be a quorum at a meeting, all those present need not vote; hence it is possible for a minority to take a decision.

If any councillor so requests, the voting on any question must be recorded to show whether each councillor present and voting gave a vote for or against that question and who abstained. In the case of an equality of votes, the person presiding at a meeting of the council (or of a committee) has a second or casting vote.

## Minutes

Minutes are the official record of the business carried out at meetings. Councils are required by law to keep official minute books and this responsibility rests with the Clerk and Chief Executive.

## Minutes have several functions:

- They define precisely what has been decided
- They form the basis of the officers' limits of authority to implement council decisions
- They provide evidence in law to verify what the council decided
- They are part of the official history of the council and the only official record of its decisions and actions; however they are not intended to be a verbatim record of the proceedings.

Most councils number their minutes to distinguish the committee and the particular issue, to avoid duplication and to allow members to refer to a specific item at a subsequent meeting. The names of members present are recorded in the minutes and clearly indicate who was in the Chair. Late arrivals and early departures are noted in order that records of participation in decisions are accurate and that attendance allowances can be checked.

Usually the first business at a meeting of the council is to approve the minutes of the previous meeting to ensure they accurately record what was decided. The Chair asks for agreement that the minutes are a correct record, then signs the minutes. The minutes of a committee meeting are presented to the full council either as a report on the committee's action where the committee has exercised a power conferred on it, or to seek adoption of a recommendation made by the committee.

After the council meeting at which the different committee reports are confirmed, the public have a right to see the minutes and may examine these at the council offices. The public can also access minutes through libraries and increasingly through council websites.

## The Council's Seal

Every district council must have a Seal for use as the council's official signature and its use must be officially authorised by a council resolution. Standing Orders lay down rules for its use and each council administration will have a register of all the documents sealed. The Seal is usually designed with the council's armorial bearing and embossed through a die-stamping machine. It is used at council



meetings on such items as contracts, deeds and conveyances.

## Admission to meetings

Legislation relating to admission to meetings is set out in legislation. Every council meeting is open to the public and the press, for whom certain facilities must be provided. In certain circumstances a district council can, by resolution, exclude the public and press from a meeting. Exclusion for all or part of the proceedings is likely whenever publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest. This may be due either to the confidential nature of the business to be dealt with, or for special reasons specified in the resolution. For example, a council may decide to consider advice from sources other than councillors and committees as a special reason.

The statutory right of admission applies only to meetings of a council rather than committees. However there is nothing to prevent a council from allowing the press or public to attend committee meetings if the committee so desires. The statutory right of admission is not confined to local electors or ratepayers; any member of the public is entitled to attend.

Only newspapers have a statutory right to have copies of the agenda of a council meeting as circulated to councillors, but omitting any item during the proceedings on which the meeting is likely not to be open to the public.

While the public and press have a right to be present at a council meeting, subject to the aforementioned exclusion, the law expressly gives the power to exclude persons to prevent disorderly conduct or disturbance at a meeting. A district council is not required to allow the taking of photographs of proceedings or the use of any means to enable any person not present to see or hear any of the proceedings or a commentary on proceedings as they take place.

## Chief Executive and Officers

Every council's organisational structure has unique features. However most councils will have the following departments although they

may not be known by the names shown here:

### Technical Services

- Street cleansing, waste collection
- Parks development and maintenance
- Building maintenance
- Street naming
- Provision of technical advice

### Leisure Services

- Management of leisure centres and sports facilities
- Tourism development and management of tourist information centres
- Sports, arts and community development

### Environmental Services

- Pollution control and noise complaints
- Health and safety
- Consumer protections
- Food control and hygiene
- Building control

### Administration

- Dog and litter control
- Licensing and entertainment permits
- Registrar of births, marriages and deaths
- Public rights of way
- Burials

### Corporate Services

- Responsibility for financial accounts, salaries
- Often includes HR and IT

### Economic Development

- Promotion of local development by encouraging and supporting local enterprise and overseas companies
- Constrained not to exceed 5p in £1 of rateable value to promote economic development by LG miscellaneous provisions 1992

The Local Government Act requires the council to appoint a Clerk, but the post holder is now almost invariably known as the Chief Executive who is head of the corporate organisation, is the accounting officer and undertakes specific electoral duties.

## The main functions of a Chief Executive are:

- To act as the principal adviser on policy and procedural matters
- To ensure efficient and effective implementation of the Council's programmes, policies and decisions
- To head the paid employees of the council
- To take overall responsibility for development, implementation and updates to the Council's corporate plan
- To ensure that the organisation is driven by its mission and objectives
- To act as a channel of information between the internal administration and the elected members
- To sanction the organisation of council ceremonial and social occasions
- To maintain and develop key relationships between the council and outside organisations
- To develop and maintain appropriate relationships with Council Members (and between Members and staff), government departments and agencies and key local stakeholders in the community
- To ensure a corporate as opposed to fragmented approach to council business
- To oversee delivery of services and monitoring performance to ensure Best Value
- To represent the council in negotiations at various levels
- To act as the Chief Financial Accounting Officer (in most cases)
- To organise local government elections as Deputy Returning Officer

Frequently the Chief Executive may have his or her own department, which deals with the central or corporate functions of the council.

## Local Government Finance

This section gives a brief overview of financial matters in local government. A full account is available in the 'Guide to Local Government Finance in Northern Ireland,' produced for the Local Government Training Group by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (NI). This guide should be available within your council.

## Local Government Expenditure - Revenue and Capital

Local government exists to provide a range of services. Expenditure on these services falls into one of two categories, namely:

- Capital expenditure - monies expended on the acquisition of tangible assets such as land, buildings, vehicles, and major plant
- Revenue or 'current' expenditure - monies expended on the day-to-day provision of services e.g. wages and salaries, heat and light, rent and rates, and the purchase of services and materials.

## Capital Income

Several sources of capital income are available but the two most common are:

- Grants - central government sometimes contributes towards the cost of a specific capital project. At the present time most capital grants tend to originate from Europe or from a specific body such as the Foundation for Sport and the Arts
- Borrowing - the bulk of local government capital outlay is paid for with borrowed funds. Councils have powers to raise funds from a variety of sources, but most borrowings come from the Government Loans Fund or are raised on the market.

As borrowings must be repaid, each year a council's revenue account makes a number of payments known as 'loan charges' or 'debt charges'. This expenditure simply represents the annual repayment of borrowed funds together with interest thereon.

The council may also make direct contributions from its revenue account to finance its capital expenditure. Alternatively it may make revenue contributions to a Capital Fund to build up a 'ring-fenced' source of finance for specific projects. Generally, direct or indirect contributions from revenue are small or limited by statute.

## Revenue Income

As explained above, revenue expenditure comprises the day-to-day running costs of council services together with loan charges. There are four main sources of funding as set out below:

- District Rate - by far the most significant source of revenue is the district rate met by the collection of rates from the authority's ratepayers. The proportion of the rates bill that is used to pay for the local council's services is known as the "District Rate"
- Fees and Charges - these represent monies raised by the authority itself by charging for some of its services. Examples would include admission charges to leisure centres, building inspection fees, trade waste collection charges, and catering franchises
- Specific Revenue Based Government Grants – sometimes government departments make a contribution to the running costs of services. A current example of such assistance would be the Community Relations Grant towards the cost of employing a Community Relations Officer and providing a programme of cross-community events
- General Exchequer Grant – central government makes a general contribution towards the overall net revenue costs of council services. The amount of general grant received is determined by a complex formula and varies significantly between individual councils

The council may also carry forward a reserve surplus on the annual accounts to cater for unanticipated demand. In addition, the council may make contributions to, or allocations from, a Repairs and Renewals Fund. The use of such reserve funding can assist councils in their financial planning.

## The Rating System in Northern Ireland

You will be aware that in Northern Ireland a number of local services are not administered by councils, having been transferred to government departments or appointed public bodies in the 1970s, for example education, housing, personal social services, roads and water.

For this reason the rates levy in the Province is a combination of two elements, namely:

- Regional Rate - this finances those local services that are not administered by councils and is struck by the Department of Finance and Personnel at a uniform rate for all councils. While non-domestic ratepayers pay the full rate poundage, domestic ratepayers enjoy a reduction known as the Domestic Rate Aid Grant (DRAG)
- District Rate - which varies from one council area to another and finances those local services that are directly administered by local authorities. On average around 65% of a district council's income is met from the district rate. As a result of revaluation of domestic properties in 1996 district councils are now required to strike a separate rate for domestic and non-domestic sectors.

## Pre-2007 System

The basis of valuation of property in Ireland was originally laid down in the Valuation (Ireland) Act 1852. Since that date there have been various other Valuation and Rating Acts and Orders and up until the latest review, rating was based on the Rates (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 as subsequently amended.

At present, the valuation of all rateable property is fixed on the basis of rental value. The Net Annual Value (NAV) is the yearly rent for which the property could be let, assuming that it was vacant and that the tenant agreed to pay the rates, keep the property in repair and be responsible for its insurance. The rateable value is generally the NAV but may be varied by statute in the case of property deemed exempt either partially or in full.

## Post-2007 System

One of the most fundamental changes following the rating review will be the move away from rental valuations, as detailed above, to an individual assessment of the capital value of every residential property in Northern Ireland using sales evidence from the housing market.

A discrete capital value system will be used, involving the application of a single tax rate to an individual assessment of each property. This system contrasts with the English system of banding, where households are allocated to one of a number of different bands according to their capital value. The band determines the amount of rates to be paid, with all households within the same band paying the same amount.

Legislation requires, among other things, the maintenance and updating of the Valuation List. That list is based on each of the 26 district council areas, sub-divided into wards with properties arranged street by street in basic alphabetical order and shows the Net Annual Value (NAV) of all properties. Ratepayers have the right to inspect the list and extract information.

## Annual Revenue Budget and Striking the District Rate

In order to strike the District Rate, the council draws up detailed estimates of revenue expenditure and income for each incoming financial year, which runs from 1 April to 31 March. These documents are referred to as the "Annual Estimates" and a great deal of time and effort is devoted to their preparation.

The Annual Estimates serve two purposes, namely:

- they enable the council to calculate the District Rate income which it will need
- they serve as detailed budgets of revenue income and expenditure

Your council must fix its district rate not later than 15th February each year.

## Review of Rating System

The Northern Ireland Executive launched a fundamental review of rating policy in 2000 as the existing system in Northern Ireland was considered to be unfair and in need of modernisation. The aim of the review was to create a system that would share the local tax burden in a fairer way between businesses and households. It is proposed that the first rates bills to be prepared under the new system will be sent out in April 2007.

Domestic rates bills will be calculated on the basis of capital values rather than on rental values as at present. The change to capital values may cause a some confusion and concern, with some larger property owners being asked to pay more as smaller properties attract a lower charge. A transitional relief system may be introduced to alleviate the burden on those ratepayers facing larger bills.

## Abstract of Accounts

Local authorities are required to produce annual accounts, usually referred to as the 'Abstract of Accounts'. In these financial statements you will see a summary of the council's financial transactions for the past year including details of revenue income and expenditure, capital outlays and financing, and loans borrowed or repaid.

## General Exchequer Grant

The Department of the Environment provides direct support to the 26 district councils by way of the General Exchequer Grant. This grant consists of a 'derating' element and a 'resources' element, with the objectives of

- compensating all councils for loss of rate income due to the statutory derating of certain properties (to be phased out in later years)
- providing additional finance to those councils whose rateable value per head of population falls below a standard determined each year by the Department.

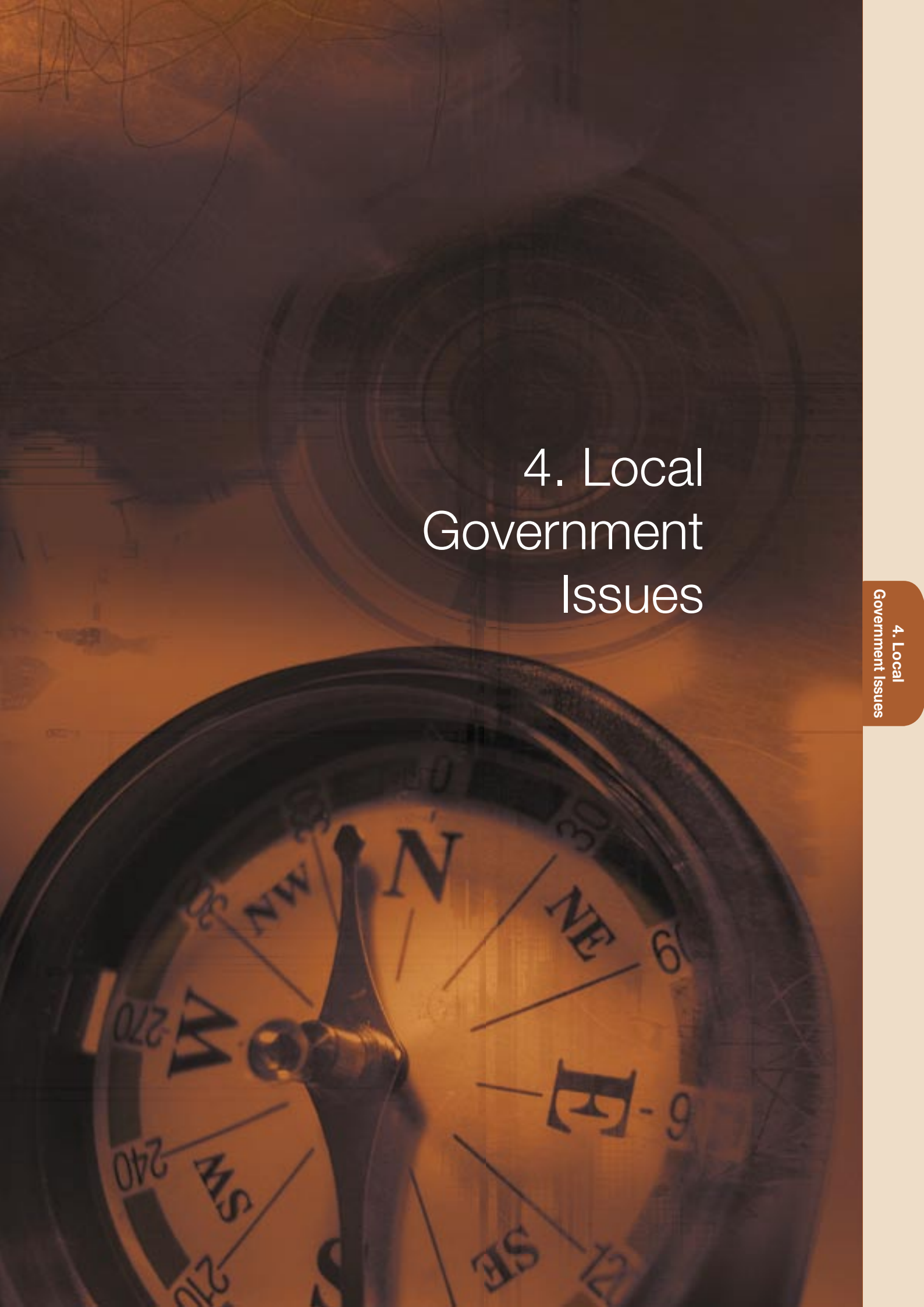


## **Department of the Environment**

The Department of the Environment has statutory powers to request information, reports and returns from councils and can order inquiries into any matter relating to the function of the council. Where a council fails to discharge a statutory function, the DoE can direct it to take specified action. If a council fails to take such action, the Department can empower its officials to exercise the functions of the council.

## **Local Government Auditor**

A Local Government Auditor, who reports his findings to the Department of the Environment, certifies the council's Abstract of Accounts. The Auditor has considerable powers to challenge actions taken by a council which he considers unlawful. In certain cases the Auditor can apply to the court for a determination that the expenditure is unlawful and the court can then decide whether to surcharge the elected members concerned. If this surcharge exceeds £2,000, the court may order that the members involved be disqualified.



## 4. Local Government Issues

## 4 Local Government Issues

This chapter provides an introduction to some current issues affecting all councils in Northern Ireland. You will also encounter issues that are unique to your area and these will best be approached by discussing them with your council colleagues.

### Best Value

The Local Government (Best Value) Act (NI) 2002 requires district councils to continuously improve the services they provide to members of the public. In particular the Act provides that:

‘A council shall make arrangements for continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

and

For the purpose of deciding how to carry out its duty ...., a council shall consult persons appearing to be representative of:

- (a) persons liable to pay rates in the district of the council;
- (b) persons who use or are likely to use services provided by the council; and
- (c) persons appearing to the council to have an interest in the district of the council.

The Best Value concept is based on 12 principles which are the driving force behind continuous improvement. There is an obligation on councils to commit to Best Value and demonstrate how they have matched their services to the needs of the local population that they serve.

Councils must achieve economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services. They must consult with customers and have a programme of continuous improvement but are free to achieve Best Value within the parameters of the legislation in the way that they consider best.

Performance reports are produced, comparisons between councils are carried out on a voluntary basis, and each council produces a Performance Improvement Plan.

### The 12 Best Value principles are:

- Councils owe a duty of Best Value to local people
- Best Value is about effectiveness and quality as well as economy and efficiency
- The duty of Best Value applies across all council services
- There is no bias in favour of either direct council provision of services or contracted provision from other providers
- Competition may help deliver Best Value
- Central government will continue to set the basic framework for service provision
- Local targets, based on national targets and performance indicators, should support competition between councils
- Targets should be built on performance information
- Performance information should be capable of being audited, and should be audited
- Auditors will report publicly on council's Best Value performance
- External intervention will be an option for poorly performing or failing Councils
- The form of intervention will be appropriate to the nature of failure

Unlike Best Value regimes in other parts of the UK, central government in NI has no power to issue directions or guidance to councils in relation to their duty to ensure continuous improvement. In terms of accountability, councils are essentially responsible to their ratepayers, the users of their services and other people who have an interest in their areas. However, in conjunction with the councils, the DoE has established a Best Value Steering Group to oversee the development of Best Value.

The Steering Group comprises representatives from the DoE, the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA), the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, the Association of Public Service Excellence, the Local Government Staff Commission and the Best Value Managers' Forum.

Initially the Steering Group established three working groups to undertake different aspects of Best Value: to develop Best Value guidance, to refine existing performance indicators and to carry out a Residents' Satisfaction Survey. These tasks were completed in early 2004, and following the working groups' dissolution the Steering Group appointed a Best Value Executive Team to manage future Best Value developments. The Executive Team reports directly to the Steering Group, membership details of which can be obtained from the officer responsible for Best Value in your council.

The work of the Executive Team is dependent on the commitment of its members and on financial support received from the Local Government Training Group and the Department of the Environment. At present, the Executive Team are engaged in developing toolkits on specific Best Value topics to supplement the Best Value Guidance. For further information please see the best value website on: [www.bestvalueni.com](http://www.bestvalueni.com)

## Community Planning and the Power of Well-being

The Community Planning process provides a framework for making public services responsive to, and organised around, the needs of communities.

### The main aims of Community Planning are:

- Ensuring people and communities are genuinely engaged in the decisions made on public services which affect them; allied to
- A commitment from organisations to work together in providing better public services.

Community Planning provides councils and their partners with a framework to increase the capacity of public sector agencies to address cross-cutting issues. It helps local communities to tackle the social, economic and environmental issues within their areas in a 'joined-up' approach, for example on issues such as sustainable development, waste management, health improvement, community safety, economic development, European funding and social inclusion.

Community planning is also about engaging local communities in a way that genuinely reflects their needs and aspirations and involves them in the development and delivery of a shared vision for their areas. This engagement will be most successful when it is approached on a local community's own terms and is related to peoples' everyday lives.

### In social terms, key benefits of a community involvement approach include:

- Priorities are sensitised to the needs / concerns of different socially excluded groups
- The capacity of communities to take on more proactive roles in addressing local needs and concerns is strengthened
- The basis on which to secure proper integration of services is improved, as the benefits of better policy and service delivery must be demonstrated at a local level.

Community Planning is well established in Scotland where a legal requirement has been placed on local authorities to set up Community Planning Partnerships. Aberdeen City Council has been involved in the community planning process since 1998 and launched its first 10-year Community Plan in 2001. Their website provides excellent information on how community planning has benefited the City  
(see [www.communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk](http://www.communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk))

Councils in Northern Ireland are beginning to become involved and to date have participated in community planning activity in areas such as:

- Local Agenda 21, Local Strategic Partnerships, Leader Programmes, Community Safety and Investing for Health
- Integrated Development Plans
- Visioning Processes
- Stakeholder Processes
- Community Planning.

At the NI Local Government Conference in 2002, delegates agreed that councils should seek the role of Civic Leadership, which could best be delivered using the Community Planning process. To allow councils to undertake this work Councils would need a general 'Power of Well-Being'.



In England the sustainable development agenda has been mainstreamed into the community planning process. Many councils in Northern Ireland are committed to their sustainable development work and currently need an appropriate mechanism to deliver this work at local level. It is extremely important in this context that local government explores in detail with others what this power is and how it could best be utilised in Northern Ireland. To support development in this area, NILGA, SOLACE and Sustainable NI are working together to bring this work forward.

A function of promoting well-being was conferred on English and Welsh local authorities in 2000 and on Scottish Local Authorities in 2003. That function deals with the promotion of the economic, social or environmental well-being of their areas.

### **The key provisions of the function in England and Wales are:**

- a wide power for local authorities to do anything that they consider likely to achieve the objectives
- a duty to prepare a strategy for promoting or improving the well-being of the area, which contributes to the achievement of sustainable development
- a power for the Secretary of State to remove any legislative obstacles to using the well-being power
- a power for the Secretary of State to remove other statutory plan requirements.

The Scottish power of well-being goes further, to confer a duty on non-departmental public bodies such as the enterprise agency, health boards and the police authority to 'participate' in community plans. It is apparent that the introduction of a similar function could offer significant benefits to the work of local government in Northern Ireland, in particular allowing local bodies to build on the experiences of partnership working and marking a departure from the traditional statutory functions of local authorities. The power has been compared to the responsibilities conferred on councils to promote local economic development.

Best Value, Sustainability, Local Agenda 21, Community Safety, Economic Development, Spatial Planning and Regeneration, Transport,

Housing, Culture and Leisure, Waste Management and Social Inclusion are all initiatives that could or do fall within the umbrella of the power of well-being. Other useful websites where you can find further information include:

[www.communityplanning.org.uk](http://www.communityplanning.org.uk)

and

[www.communityplanning.net/index.htm](http://www.communityplanning.net/index.htm)

## **Community Relations**

Community relations and cultural diversity are complex issues requiring a variety of responses and approaches. Work in these areas in Northern Ireland is based on three key principles that are inextricably linked to each other, namely diversity, interdependence and equity.

- Diversity can be seen in the ever-changing variety of NI community and individual experiences. Respect for diversity affirms the value that can be derived from the existence, recognition, understanding and tolerance of difference (whether expressed through religious, ethnic, political or gender background).
- Interdependence requires recognition by different interest or identity groupings of their obligations and commitments to others and of the inter-connectedness of individual / community experiences and ambitions leading to the development of a society that is at once cohesive and diverse.
- Equity is understood as a commitment at all levels within society to ensuring equality of access to resources, structures and decision-making processes and to the adoption of actions to secure and maintain these objectives.

## **District Policing Partnerships**

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

District Policing Partnerships (DPPs) are local partnerships established under the terms of the Police (NI) Act 2000 to provide local people with a mechanism for having a say on how their community, neighbourhood and district is policed by officers from the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

Partnerships are autonomous bodies within local councils and work independently of the police to perform their functions as set out within the Police Act. They also carry out additional work as requested by the Northern Ireland Policing Board. DPPs are essentially partnerships between local councils and representatives of the local community.

## Legislative Basis

The 1998 Belfast Agreement made provision for the assessment of local policing structures and the establishment of an Independent Commission on Policing in Northern Ireland. The subsequent report of the Independent Commission, known as the Patten Report, made 175 recommendations on local policing. Recommendation 27 required the establishment of DPPs in each council area.

These recommendations led to the subsequent introduction of legislation to establish a District Policing Partnership in each council area and to realign police districts into district command units to coincide with the boundaries of local councils and DPPs. The Police Act and the 'Code of Practice on Functions & Responsibilities' govern the workings of and the context in which all Partnerships must operate.

## Structure and Representation

Partnerships are made up of both political (councillors) and independent members who are appointed or nominated for a period of four years or until the date of the next local government elections, whichever comes first. Political members are nominated from the local council, whereas the NI Policing Board appoints independent members through a local recruitment process.

The local council, within the confines of the Act, dictates the size of the Partnership in terms of membership. To this end, councils have the option of establishing a Partnership that consists of 15, 17 or 19 members. Each Partnership must always consist of one more political member than the number of independent members. For example, a 15-member Partnership would have eight political members and seven independent members. A Councillor always holds the position of Chair.

To ensure Partnerships are representative of the demographic profile of the district, the membership is drawn from all sections of the community, taking into account the results of appropriate district wide census surveys.

## Core Functions

As required by the Police Act partnerships must fulfil a series of functions. These functions are further expanded upon in the 'Code of Practice on the Exercise of Functions & Responsibilities'.

### In short however, Partnerships must:

- Provide views to the District Commander on the policing of the district. Partnerships must, through a process of negotiation influence district commanders on the formulation of local policing plans, which entails identifying and agreeing upon a number of priorities. Members must consider results obtained from all consultative work to ensure priorities agreed are consistent with the districts policing need.
- Monitor Police Performance. Partnerships hold many of their meetings in public session to offer communities the opportunity to become involved in local policing. At such meetings, members monitor quarterly, 6-monthly and year-end reports, providing constructive feedback on local policing arrangements and targets set within policing plans. Members of the public are encouraged to submit questions to be answered by the District Commander.
- Consult. Consultation is central to the work undertaken by any partnership. Consultation processes must ensure as many people as possible are given the opportunity to engage. Consultative arrangements to gauge opinion on policing are vital to inform partnerships before they agree priorities for inclusion in local policing plans.
- Obtain the co-operation of the public to prevent crime. To ensure partnerships are focused and working strategically with their local district command unit and council

a strategy must be devised, and more importantly implemented, to gain the co-operation of the public to prevent crime. The overall aim of such a strategy is to impact upon crime levels within the district.

Communities can become involved in shaping the policing of their neighbourhood by attending and asking questions at public meetings, submitting their views on local policing or by becoming a member of a police consultative forum.

## Allowances and Financial Arrangements

The NI Policing Board contributes 75% of all funding required by partnerships to undertake their functions, with the local council paying the remaining 25%.

DPP members receive an allowance for performing their duties. This is paid monthly and the amount depends on a member's position in the partnership.

### Allowance rates are currently:

1. Chairperson (per annum)  
£4,800
2. Vice-Chairperson (per annum)  
£3,600
3. Member (per annum)  
£2,400

Allowances payable to Belfast DPP members differ, due to the Partnership's size and structure (see the 'Code of Practice on Functions & Responsibilities').

## Essential Reading for New DPP Members

New, or potential, members may wish to consult and consider a number of informational sources on the establishment and operation of district policing partnerships. Your local DPP Manager can provide you with policing plans for your district and other publications produced by your area's partnership.

### Other information sources include:

- Report of the Independent Commission on Policing for NI, September 1999
- Police (NI) Act 2000

- DPP 'Code of Practice on Functions & Responsibilities', published by NI Policing Board
- [www.districtpolicing.com](http://www.districtpolicing.com) and [www.nipolicingboard.org.uk](http://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk)

## e-Government

e-Government is an often overused term that simply refers to the use of computers and technology to modernise the operation of government, its interactions with citizens and its service delivery mechanisms. The phenomenal growth of mobile phones, text messaging and e-mail demonstrates the public appetite for new ways of interacting. This has presented the council with a unique opportunity to improve its relationship with its citizens.

Unlike English local authorities, which have a central government-imposed statutory target of putting 100% of their services online by 2005 and have been given funding to achieve this, Northern Ireland councils have neither adopted nor been issued with any targets or guidelines on the implementation of e-Government.

As a result, it has been up to individual councils to implement their own modernisation agenda with the result that e-Government issues have traditionally struggled to find their way on to many council agendas or to gain significant support from elected members.

This is beginning to change, however, with many councils realising the huge benefits that modernisation can bring. At its most basic level, all councils in Northern Ireland now have a website, with some allowing citizens to carry out transactions online which previously required a visit to the council offices or a phone call during office hours. For example, a number of councils allow citizens to buy dog licences, wheelie bins and property certificates over the internet. Also, a number of council chambers have become paperless, with elected members receiving and viewing all council meeting papers on a laptop.

But this is only the beginning: the potential benefits that technology and modernisation can bring are unquestionable and the challenge now is to ensure that councils

move forward in the most efficient and co-operative manner possible. To this end the NILGA e-Government Working Group was established in 2003, consisting of council Chief Executives, IT officers and central government representatives. It aims to develop a common vision and strategy for local government, provide support for members councils and ensure that local government gets value for money. This will be achieved by jointly developing projects, conducting joint procurement and ensuring local government fully integrates with the wider public sector modernisation agenda.

The vision statement of the NI Local Government e-Government Working Group is 'that Local Government in Northern Ireland, in co-operation with partners across all sectors, fully embraces the modernisation process to provide citizens with access to information and key services when, where and how they want and in a manner that maximises the efficiency, effectiveness & inclusiveness of service provision'.

In short, e-Government initiatives aim to provide citizens with the choice to interact with government when, where and how they choose and to make council operations understandable, efficient and user-friendly. Lack of funding, however, remains a barrier and the Working Group is lobbying central government on this issue.

## Equality Issues

Equality Provisions of the Northern Ireland Act Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 has profound implications for decision-making by councils. Section 75 grew out of the earlier, non-statutory Policy Appraisal and Fair Treatment (PAFT) guidelines and from the Good Friday / Belfast Agreement, and makes equality issues central to the administrative mainstream of public policy decision-making.

## The Legislative Context

In the Agreement reached between Governments and political parties in April 1998, the section dealing with Rights, Safeguards and Equality of opportunity included a commitment to a statutory obligation on public authorities. This was then

implemented through the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Under Section 75(1) of this Act, public authorities are required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between:

- (a) persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- (b) men and women generally;
- (c) persons with a disability and persons without; and
- (d) persons with dependants and persons without.

A public authority is also required, in carrying out its functions, to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group. (Section 75 (2)).

## What does having regard or due regard mean?

The Equality Commission's guidance for implementing Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 states:

'The term due regard was intended to be, and is, stronger than regard, but in either case the authority is required by the statute to take the specified matters into account and give them the required weight when carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland. Authorities must appreciate Parliament's stated assessment that there is a need to promote equality of opportunity between the categories of persons specified in Section 75 (1) and a desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group (Section 75 (2)). Recognition of the inter-dependence of equality and good relations is crucial.'

There is an inter-relationship between the duties. Essentially good relations cannot be delivered without equality also being delivered, as equality provides a baseline on which to build good relations. The Commission's guidance advises:



'To the extent that public authorities perceive... a tension between the two duties, the primary duty of a public authority is its equality duty. The good relations duty cannot be invoked to justify a failure or refusal to comply with the equality duty.'

Most councils now have promoting equality of opportunity and good relations as strategic corporate objectives.

## Scope of the Legislation

Designated public authorities include all 26 district councils, the 11 government departments, all education and library boards, all health boards and trusts, PSNI, NIO, housing associations, Northern Ireland Housing Executive, Inland Revenue, Police Ombudsman and a range of other non departmental public bodies including the District Policing Partnerships.

Promoting equality of opportunity involves more than the elimination of discrimination, requiring proactive measures. Public Authorities, in considering their Section 75(1) duty are obliged to have regard to the need for affirmative action to correct disadvantage among particular sections of society. There should also be no conflict between Section 75(1) duties and specific policy measures to target disadvantage and social need, eg the New Targeting Social Need (New TSN) and Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI) initiatives.

Discrimination of various kinds is already prohibited under anti-discrimination statutes. The duty imposed by Section 75(1) extends to categories of persons not yet covered by Northern Ireland or UK anti-discrimination statutes. These are:

Persons of different ages – both young and old; and  
Persons with and without dependants

The statutory duties make equality central to the whole range of public policy decision-making. This approach is referred to as "mainstreaming". Mainstreaming equality requires all public authorities to engage directly with equality issues through all stages policy making and service delivery. Mainstreaming of equality timetables into other policy review

timetables eg Best Value, performance management strategies and good practice reviews, contribute to a 'joined-up' approach to policy review, ensuring better value for public money.

Statutory duties apply to the internal policies (relating to people who work for the council), as well as external policies (relating to those who are, or could be, served by the organisation).

## Implementation of the Statutory Duties

There are effectively three stages in the implementation of the statutory duties:

1. Preparation of an Equality Scheme
2. Approval of the Equality Scheme by the Equality Commission
3. Implementation of the Equality Scheme

The equality scheme is an important document. It is both a statement of the council's commitment to fulfilling the statutory duties and a plan for its performance. Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act specifies particular elements that a scheme must contain. The main elements are:

**A general introductory statement** - This statement of commitment signed by the Mayor and the Chief Executive of the council to implement equality of opportunity and good relations.

**Consulting** - The council is commitment to consult with all it stakeholders. Consultation underpins and is an integral part of the process of implementation of the duties. Consultation must be both meaningful and inclusive. The equality scheme must contain a list of those to be consulted.

### Conducting Equality Impact Assessments

- Councils must identify those policies existing or new, written or unwritten, formal or informal, that are likely to have a significant impact on equality of opportunity. This is done through a screening exercise where a systematic review of each policy is undertaken.

An equality impact assessment (EQIA) is a thorough and systematic analysis of a policy. The primary function of the EQIA is

to determine the extent (if any) of differential impact of the policy upon the relevant groups. If an adverse effect is identified, the equality impact assessment must consider alternative or mitigating measures.

On occasions the EQIA process may lead to the council concluding that the existing policy is appropriate and no opportunities exist to better promote equality of opportunity. However it is important that any decisions reached can be justified and reasonable.

Training all staff on issues relevant to the duties.

**Communication and Delivery** - Ensuring that any information the council disseminates and the services, which it provides, are in an accessible in a format.

Dealing with complaints arising from a failure to comply with the scheme The Equality Commission has powers to investigate complaints made by individuals who claim to be affected by an alleged failure to comply with an approved equality scheme. The Equality Commission may itself generate an investigation where it believes that a public authority may have failed to comply with an approved equality scheme.

## Practical Implications

It is advisable that councillors receive a briefing on the implications of Section 75.

Any new or revised policies considered by the council should have undergone a screening process to determine any impact on equality of opportunity.

In the next 12 months the councils must initiate a review of the scheme and forward a report of this review to the Equality Commission. The review is a formal review of the scheme to evaluate its effectiveness in meeting the council's responsibilities. The Equality Commission will issue guidance on how the schemes should be reviewed.

**Further Information: Advice and information on the statutory duties can be obtained from the Equality Commission for Northern**

**Ireland, Equality House, 7-9 Shaftsbury Square, Belfast, BT2 7DP, Tel 028 9050 0600.**

## European Funding in Northern Ireland, 2000-2006

The European Council decided that for the period 2000-2006 those regions which were eligible for Objective One funding during the 1994-1999 period but who lost this entitlement for 2000-2006 would receive support as an "Objective One region in transition". Northern Ireland is in this category.

## The Community Support Framework in Northern Ireland (CSF)

The details of the Structural Funds assistance to Northern Ireland are laid down in the Northern Ireland Community Support Framework (CSF). The CSF is delivered through two operational programmes:

- NI Programme for Building Sustainable Prosperity 2000-2006
- EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland 2000-2004.

## NI Programme for Building Sustainable Prosperity, 2000-2006

This programme is the largest component of the Community Support Framework, accounting for 68% of the Structural Funds allocated (890 million euro). Its main objective is "to move Northern Ireland to a state of sustainable prosperity in a competitive modern economy by focusing on the restructuring of its businesses and the key skills development of its people while maintaining a quality environment."

The BSP addresses the wider developmental issues facing Northern Ireland and represents the convergence of the NI Programme for Government and the strategic objectives of the EU in the application of structural funds.

The programme has five priorities that explain the strategic context for the actions proposed in the priority and how it develops the relevant CSF priority:

- Priority 1: Economic Growth  
 Priority 2: Employment  
 Priority 3: Urban and Social Revitalisation  
 Priority 4: Agriculture, Rural Development, Forestry and Fisheries  
 Priority 5: The Environment.

## EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in NI (PEACE II)

Peace II had a budget of 704 million euro from 2000-2004, complementing the Programme for Building Sustainable Prosperity and was designed to address the legacy of conflict and use opportunities arising from peace. In early 2005, the European Union agreed to extend the Peace II programme for a further two years until the end of 2006 with a budget of 120 million euro, thereby coinciding with the programming period for the Structural Funds.

### The Peace II Programme has five main priorities:

- Economic Renewal;
- Social Integration; Inclusion and Reconciliation;
- Locally based Regeneration and Development Strategies;
- Outward and Forward Looking Region;
- Cross Border Co-operation.

These five priorities have been sub-divided into an extensive list of measures. Details of the measures and the bodies appointed to implement them are available from the Special EU Programmes Body.

### Other European Union initiatives

Community Initiatives are special forms of assistance proposed by the Commission to member states. There are now four Community Initiatives operating in Northern Ireland for the period 2000-06:

1. INTERREG IIIA is designed to support cross-border co-operation, social cohesion and economic development between regions of the EU. The Northern Ireland / Ireland Programme covers all of Northern Ireland and the six border counties of the Republic. It aims to address the economic and social

disadvantage that can result from the existence of a border. The programme budget is 179 million euro between 2000-2006. The priorities under INTERREG IIIA are:

- Integrated Local Development Strategies
- Supporting Physical Infrastructure
- Environment and Civic and Community Networking.
- Technical Assistance.

2. Leader + runs from 2000 to 2006 with a budget of 15 million euro. The objective of the programme is to increase the economic and employment contribution that very small businesses (including small farms) make to the rural economy by encouraging local partnerships to test new approaches to micro-business development and to work in collaboration with similar partnerships in other rural areas. Leader + is administered by local partnerships which must comprise a balanced and representative selection of partners drawn from the different community and economic sectors in the local area concerned. The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) is the administrative authority for Leader + in Northern Ireland.
3. EQUAL is part of the European Union's strategy for more and better jobs and for ensuring that no one is denied access to them. EQUAL will test new ways of tackling discrimination and inequality experienced by those in work and provides the scope to try out new ideas that could change future policy and practice in employment and training. The EQUAL Programme has a budget of 12 million euro and will target two priorities: Employability and Equal Opportunities.
4. Urban II is a European Structural Fund worth in excess of £10.5 million to the Inner North Belfast Area. The Belfast Regeneration Office acts as the managing authority for this fund. The URBAN initiative focuses on achieving: a co-ordinated physical, economic and social action in urban areas of high disadvantage and the exchange of experience and best practice from participating cities across the European Union.

## Monitoring Committees

Each of the funding programmes has a monitoring committee. Its purpose is to monitor, evaluate and review the performance of the funding programme. Members are drawn from the local government, community and voluntary sectors and agricultural, business, environmental and equality organisations.

## Local Strategy Partnerships

Local Strategy Partnerships (LSPs) were established to oversee the implementation of Priority 3 'Locally Based Regeneration and Development Strategies' of the Peace II funding. LSPs have responsibility for measures relating to the Social Economy and Human Resources and Development initiatives. The partnerships consist of representatives of local and central government, the voluntary sector; business, agriculture and the trade unions. (Contact details for the LSPs are set out in Chapter 8).

A review of regional policy and funding priorities for the new European Union of 25 member states is in progress, with the current proposals looking at a more simplified range of objectives and financial instruments after 2006. As Northern Ireland is currently in a transitional phase, it will not be eligible for the same portions of funding it has previously received.

## Freedom of Information

Freedom of Information (FOI) concerns the right of access to information held by public authorities including central and local government, schools, the health service and the police. Its purpose is to promote a culture of openness and accountability in the public sector and to facilitate better understanding of how public authorities carry out their duties.

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, from January 2005 anyone seeking information from a public authority has had:

- the right to be told whether or not the authority holds the information being requested
- the right to have that information communicated to them (subject to certain exemptions)

The Act also requires each public authority to produce a Publication Scheme, setting out details of information it will routinely make available, how the information can be obtained and whether there is any charge for it.

## Making a request for information

FOI requests can be made by anyone, although they must be in writing (a fax or e-mail is adequate). Public authorities will normally have a maximum of 20 working days to respond to the request; however there are circumstances when this time limit can be extended. A fee may be charged if the cost of producing the information exceeds a specified limit.

If an applicant is dissatisfied with the response received from the public authority, he or she may appeal this decision; firstly through the authority's own complaints procedure. If still dissatisfied, the applicant may then seek an independent review from the Information Commissioner.

## Exemptions from access

The Act lists 23 exemptions or protected categories of information. Most of these are 'qualified' exemptions in that they will apply only where it can be successfully argued that the public interest in withholding the information is greater than the public interest in releasing it. There are a smaller number of 'absolute' exemptions, where a public authority may withhold information without considering any public interest arguments.

Information about Councillors  
Councils will generally make the following information regarding each councillor available via a Publication Scheme:

- Contact details
- Amount of basic allowance paid
- Amount of attendance allowance paid
- Amount of conference expenses paid
- Amount of mileage and subsistence paid
- Details of attendance at meetings
- Membership of committees and representation on outside bodies.

The following information will also be available on request:



- Election data (votes cast)
- Declarations of interest.

## Information held by Councillors

Information held by a councillor in an individual capacity is not subject to the general right of access contained in the Freedom of Information Act. The Act applies only to information held by the council as a corporate body. However, information in the possession of a councillor that is also held by a public body, such as the council itself or another public body on which the councillor serves as the council's representative, will be accessible.

Thus any information passed by a councillor to the council or to an officer of the council will become accessible under the Act. This will include any correspondence between the council and the councillor and care should, therefore, be taken in the wording of correspondence. All e-mails sent by councillors and which are held on the council's IT system, may also be accessible.

In the case of information held by councillors in their role as council representatives on another public body, that body will deal with information requests in accordance with its own FOI procedures. Where a councillor is appointed to an organisation that is not a public body, the council will be responsible for providing only the information that it holds in relation to the other body.

## Requests for Information submitted to Councillors

If councillors receive a simple verbal request to which they respond verbally, this is outside the remit of FOI. If the request requires a substantial amount of information or access to records held by the council, the councillor should direct the applicant to the appropriate officer.

If a councillor receives a written request for information relating to an issue involving the council, this will be regarded as an FOI request and the councillor should pass it to the appropriate officer immediately.

The 20 working days' time limit for a response commences on the day on which the

councillor received the request. If a councillor receives a request for information relating to an issue involving another public body on which he or she serves, this will constitute an FOI request to the other public body and the councillor should pass the request to that body immediately.

## Councillors' Rights of Access to Information held by Council

Councillors will not generally be required to follow FOI procedures in order to obtain information about their own council. At common law, councillors are entitled to view and obtain copies of all documentation held by the council, provided they can show they have 'a need to know' in connection with their duties as a councillor, and provided they have no ulterior or improper motive.

However, the provision of information comes at a cost and councillors should ensure, where possible, that they are not used by members of the public as a conduit for access to information that is properly available through normal FOI procedures.

## Public Records

In Northern Ireland the management, preservation and disposal of public records is governed by law. As the integrated archival service, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) receives records from government departments, local authorities, non-departmental public bodies and the courts, as well as the records of landed estates and businesses, churches, societies and private individuals. PRONI currently holds around 53 kilometres of records, 10% of which is accounted for by deposits from local authorities.

PRONI is the legal place of deposit for local authority records and such records must be transferred to PRONI when they are 20 years old, unless good administrative reason exists (which must be certified annually) for their retention beyond that period by the local authority concerned.

In 1976 the Secretary of State announced the '30-year rule', where public records which are generally accessible after 30 years may be

closed for longer periods. This did not alter the right of access to local authority minutes and accounts.

The law also allows for the destruction of records as soon as they cease to have continuing administrative value, by means of disposal schedules. In this area PRONI works closely and regularly with local authorities by providing a free records management service. Assistance is provided in the drafting and finalising of disposal schedules and advice is given on filing systems and the storage of records (both manual and electronic).

Guidance is also supplied on general matters to ensure uniformity in the management of public records, a responsibility that has been given additional emphasis with the recent Freedom of Information (FOI) initiative. For further general information on record management see PRONI's booklet, 'A Guide to Records Management for District Councils'.

## Good Relations

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires a Council, in carrying out all its functions, powers and duties, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; between men and women generally; between persons with a disability and persons without; and between persons with dependants and persons without.

The Act also requires councils to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

As a democratically elected body, a council is in a prime position to demonstrate civic leadership and promote good relations in society. For example, Belfast City Council has defined good relations as 'living and working together with understanding and respect and without fear or mistrust' and has set up a Good Relations Unit to co-ordinate and integrate its work in equality, community relations and cultural diversity.

Social attitude surveys show that communities in NI continue to portray low levels of tolerance or appreciation of diversity in general and racism now appears to be even more significant than sectarianism in influencing attitudes. Belfast City Council has agreed to make efforts to tackle the challenges of a divided society and to work towards its vision of a stable, tolerant, fair and pluralist community. It is determined to enhance awareness of other cultures, address prejudice and intolerance and tackle sectarianism and racism.

Despite ongoing differences, all political parties in Belfast City Council agree that better relations will contribute to a better future and adopted the Good Relations strategy unanimously.

## The four main strands of the Council's Good Relations Strategy are:

- to promote good community relations
- to celebrate cultural diversity
- to promote equality through service delivery
- to promote equality through a representative workforce.

Like other councils, Belfast is part of the District Council Community Relations Programme, funded by the Community Relations Unit within the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. This provides 75% grant aid on the salary costs of a Community Relations Officer and certain associated costs.

Belfast City Council has provided grant aid and practical assistance to a wide variety of local projects which support and encourage good community and race relations, for example a mediation initiative to tackle racism and a programme to tackle sectarianism in local sport.

The Council acknowledges that a great deal has been achieved by individuals, groups, and organisations working, often behind the scenes, to improve community relations and reduce tension and mistrust, and is working in partnership with other public and private agencies in the City to address wider policy issues and examine the factors that cause division and exclusion.

Belfast City Council's Good Relations Steering Panel is made up from elected members from six political parties, along with representatives from the churches, trade unions, the business sector, the Community Relations Council and minority ethnic groups who are engaged in peace-building and cross-community activities and have the capacity to reach a broad audience for this work.

The Council has a responsibility not only as a provider of services for those who live and work in Belfast, but also as an employer of a substantial workforce. A Good Relations training strategy that will link into and complement existing equality training strategy is being drafted. This strategy will include cultural diversity awareness and conflict management training and will be delivered to all employees and elected members.

There are no short-term answers in the process of change that NI is going through and no quick fixes in addressing issues like prejudice and intolerance in a divided society. Developing robust relationships, within which we can still retain different opinions but where we can also respect the views of others, is essential. Working together to build mutual understanding, respect and trust and to promote good relations will take time. Promoting good community and race relations among our citizens is a matter of concern for us all and councils can make a positive contribution to this work.

Belfast's Good Relations Strategy 'Building Our Future Together' won the William Johnston Memorial Trust NI Local Government Project of the Year in 2004 and is available on the Council's website at [www.belfastcity.gov.uk](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk).

## Human Rights

The NI Human Rights Commission was established under the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The body is funded through the Northern Ireland Office and its Commissioners are appointed by the Secretary of State but it is otherwise independent of government. The Commission is the first statutory human rights body to be set up in the UK.

The Commission's primary function is to promote and protect the human rights of everyone in Northern Ireland and is also charged with consulting and advising government on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. The Commission advises government on the human rights aspects of proposed legislation and policy, promotes awareness of human rights through education and information, and finances court proceedings or related legal work to help individuals and to promote positive change.

## Human Rights Act 1998

The Human Rights Act 1998 was fully incorporated into UK domestic law in October 2000, and covers many of the rights which are contained in the European Convention on Human Rights. This means that a legal remedy on a human rights point can be sought within the Northern Ireland courts. Only if the courts fail to provide such a remedy would it be necessary to consider taking the case to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

## Working with Councils and Councillors

Due to limited resources, the Commission will not usually be able to respond to equality or policy consultations from individual councils. There are however two fields in which it is keen to work with the local government sector, and there are other ways in which it may be able to help.

## The Human Rights Commission's two priority areas are:

- Helping a council or a group of councils to develop a model Human Rights Policy covering all the ways in which council activities engage human rights principles
- Responding to joint consultations from groups of councils on topics with clear human rights relevance

## The Human Rights Commission can also provide:

- General information on the Human Rights Act 1998, including summaries of relevant cases brought before the NI courts, House of Lords or European Court of Human Rights.

- On-line access to information about human rights in Northern Ireland at [www.nihrc.org](http://www.nihrc.org)
- Access to Human Rights Act publications in our reference library, by appointment.
- Publications by the Commission on human rights matters.

## **Subject to resources, the Human Rights Commission is also able to:**

- Respond to specific queries on the implementation of the Human Rights Act and the compatibility of council policy and practice with the Act
- Provide occasional training on human rights law, preferably for groups of 10 or more senior staff or councillors

**For further information about the Commission and its work, you can visit the organisation's website at [www.nihrc.org](http://www.nihrc.org) or telephone 028 9024 3987.**

## **New Localism**

The term 'New Localism' is based on a government vision for devolving power and responsibility to improve the economic performance of UK regions and to create strong, innovative and responsive local government to develop and implement plans for better public services. The government's approach emphasises measures to foster the skills and potential of local people and communities, with local people making decisions about local issues.

The concept envisages councillors working effectively with local communities and reflecting their concerns and aspirations. This relationship, between councillors acting as community leaders and local people and other partners, is the foundation for 'new localism'. It places councils at the heart of their communities, articulating a strategic vision and harnessing the resources needed to deliver it.

In England, central government has put in place a management framework to help ensure councils deliver high standards and continuous improvement. For example, freedoms for councils to take their own borrowing decisions and powers to charge, trade and retain income from fines have been introduced.

'New Localism' moves government policy beyond the position where councils were seen as a problem and were subjected to draconian restrictions. It recognises the need to remove unnecessary constraints and to encourage greater initiative and innovation at a local level.

## **Performance Management**

Many local government initiatives rely on effective performance management for their success.

### **Performance Management is about:**

- Achieving the goals of the organisation and the community
- Prioritising what gets done and make sure there are enough resources to do it
- Ensuring local authorities provide value for money
- Motivating and managing staff
- Providing satisfaction for users and communities.

Basically it is about good management and delivering better quality services – the key reason that most members stand for election. Performance management is not just another initiative; it is taking action in response to actual performance to make outcomes better.

Performance might be at an individual, team, service, corporate or community level. To know what action to take, performance has to be monitored. To know how to judge performance, criteria relating to aims objectives and targets must be agreed. There also needs to be a method of assessing performance against the criteria, on the basis of agreed performance measures. Applying this to a whole organisation requires systematic application and coordination.

Performance management links and overlaps with other aspects of the organisation, such as leadership and culture. These links are essential to the effective use of performance management to generate better outcomes.

## **Planning**

Most local government planning functions involve commenting upon and sometimes actively opposing or supporting planning



applications brought by developers. District councils also have various statutory powers to develop and use land within their control, and this often places them as the developer sponsoring the application.

It may therefore be said that one of the functions of local government in the planning context is the developmental function. Generally speaking, district councils are in much the same position as any individual when it comes to land development. This means that planning permission is required for any 'development' of land carried on by councils.

### **Any of the following types of activity amount to 'development' requiring planning permission:**

- the carrying out of any building, engineering, mining or other similar operations in, on, over or under land
- the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or other land.

### **Deciding whether a given activity falls within these classes is complex; however you should note that the following activities are always regarded as 'development' for planning purposes:**

- the deposit of refuse or waste material on land
- using any external part of a building for the display of advertisements which is not normally used for that purpose
- the use as two or more separate dwelling-houses of any building previously used as a single dwelling-house.

### **The following activities are always regarded as not amounting to 'development' and do not require planning permission:**

- the carrying out by a council or statutory undertaker of any works for the purpose of inspecting, repairing or renewing any mains, pipes, cables or other apparatus, including the breaking open of any street or other land for that purpose
- the carrying out of works for the maintenance, improvement or other alteration of a building which affect only

the interior of the building or which do not materially affect the external appearance of a building

- the use of any land for the purposes of forestry or agriculture, and the use for any of those purposes of any building occupied in conjunction with that land
- any change of use from one use falling within a Class of Use under the Planning (Use Classes) Order (NI) 1989, as amended, to another use falling within the same Class
- the use of buildings or other land within the curtilage of a dwelling-house for any purpose incidental to the enjoyment of that dwelling-house as a dwelling-house.

### **Subsisting Permissions**

#### **When it comes to securing planning permission for proposed development it should be recognised that it may already be granted. This can arise in a number of ways:**

- Planning permission attaches to the land itself rather than to whoever may have obtained it, land purchased by a district council may already have the benefit of Planning permission for specified development as the development
- Where planning permission has previously been obtained by a district council for a given development, DOE may be prepared to regard that planning permission as covering a slightly different proposal, as long as the new proposal only involves a very limited variation and there has been no change in planning policy or circumstances
- Planning permission may be granted for the development under and subject to the limitations of a Simplified Planning Zone Scheme or an Enterprise Zone Scheme
- Planning permission may be granted under the Planning (General Development) Order (NI) 1993, as amended.

### **Applications for Planning Permission**

Where planning permission for the proposal does not subsist, application has to be made to DOE. It is not necessary for the applicant to own the land in question at the time of the application, as long as the applicant genuinely hopes to obtain an interest in the land.

Any number of planning applications can be made in relation to the same piece of land, and each must be determined on its own merits. There is, in fact, nothing to prevent an applicant from bringing repeated, identical applications, as in principle the overall circumstances can change significantly from day to day, though obviously the prospects of success are poor where no significant change has actually taken place since the last application.

Again, an application for planning permission may be amended, at least where the amendment does not involve a substantial departure from the original proposal. If the change in the proposal does involve a substantial departure, then the amendment is unlikely to be accepted by DOE, and the original application must then be withdrawn and a fresh application submitted which incorporates the change.

An alternative approach would be for DOE to accept the amendment, but to re-advertise, re-consult and re-notify neighbours. Although cumbersome, this approach removes the possibility of prejudice that can flow from a substantial amendment, and is defensible against any challenge. The advantage is that it can produce a faster determination than submitting an entirely fresh application.

## Types of Planning Application

There are various types of application relevant to councils as applicants:

- application for renewal of permission made before expiry of an existing permission
- application for planning permission to retain development which has already been carried out without the benefit of planning permission
- application for planning permission without compliance with conditions attached to an existing permission
- application for planning permission deemed to be made in the course of appealing against an Enforcement Notice restraining an alleged breach of planning control
- application for full planning permission
- application for outline planning permission followed by application for approval of reserved matters

## ■ Article 31 Major Applications

The most common categories are the last three. In terms of the difference between applications for full planning permission and application for outline permission followed by approval of reserved matters, outline applications can only be brought when the proposal involves construction work. That point aside, the basic difference in these two options is that an application for full planning permission addresses all aspects of the proposal at the outset, whereas an outline application addresses only the bare bones of the proposal, to be fleshed out at the approval of reserved matters stage. One advantage in bringing an outline application is that it is less expensive, and so is less painful if refused.

A second perceived benefit for applicants is that contentious proposals are necessarily less open to close scrutiny by objectors at the outline stage, as much of the detail has yet to crystallise. Although the detail of a proposal must emerge when application is made for approval of reserved matters, very often opposition to approval of reserved matters is relatively muted, given that by that stage the principle of the development will have been established.

In a standard appeal against refusal of planning permission, an appeal made on Form PAC1 must be received by the Planning Appeals Commission within six months of the date when the determination was notified to the applicant, or within such longer period as the Commission may allow. The Commission will allow an appeal to be made outside the six-month period only in exceptional circumstances and where compelling reasons to do so have been submitted to it in writing. Both the applicant and DOE can choose whether to have the appeal dealt with by way of an oral hearing or on the basis of written representations. There has to be unanimity between the applicant, DOE and the Commission before the appeal can be dealt with by written representations.

While there are some advantages to the written procedure in terms of speed and relative inexpense, it suffers from the major disadvantage that factual arguments on the planning merits of the cases are usually

incapable of effective challenge, as opposing witnesses are not available for face-to-face confrontation. There is, though, an opportunity to make written representations on opposing cases. The opportunity to challenge the evidence of witnesses by cross-examination is particularly important where that evidence involves professional judgements by planning consultants, architects, landscape architects etc, as those judgements may on a superficial level appear plausible but may prove to be unsustainable when probed effectively.

Alternatively, it may suit an applicant to use the written representation procedure where there are elements of the appeal vulnerable to attack, though very often an oral hearing can result in DOE's case being strengthened by the investigative process, if the Commissioner teases out aspects of that case that were not strongly stated by DOE.

## Local government's consultative role in planning

Pending the anticipated expansion of local government planning powers, the main council planning function is consultative. The Planning Service makes planning decisions but they must consult with the relevant council on each planning application and on the contents of the Area Plan. Also if the council feels that there is bias or inconsistency in how a particular application is being dealt with, it can ask for it to be referred to the Planning Directorate who will take a fresh look at it and come to a decision. Applicants can appeal to the Planning Appeals Commission where the entire history of the application will be tabled, including any comment made by the council. Some applicants may ask a Councillor to appear and give evidence in support of them at the appeal.

While consultation remains the poor cousin of direct local government planning control, its importance should not be underestimated. In the DOE's Planning Policy Statement, the Department regards the consultative role of district councils as 'an important part of the Department's decision-making process', and has set up consultative procedures designed to ensure that elected representatives have a input to the decision making process.

Post devolution, there is a duty on the Department of Social Development to consult councils in relation to the exercise of a number of planning functions which previously lay with DOE. When a council takes a forceful stance on an issue during the consultation process, DOE / DSD and, where appropriate, the Planning Appeals Commission attach considerable weight to the points made.

## The relevant district council must be consulted by DOE in the following circumstances:

- when DOE proposes to make, alter, repeal or replace a development plan relating to all / part of the council area, regardless of whether the full or truncated procedure is applied
- before making, varying or cancelling the designation of an area as a Conservation Area (an area of special architectural or historic interest the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance)
- before determining any application for planning permission relating to land situated within or partly within the district council area
- before compiling or amending its lists of buildings of special architectural or historic interest ('listed buildings')
- before issuing a certificate that DOE does not intend to list a building which is the subject of either a grant of planning permission for any development involving its alteration, extension or demolition, or an application for planning permission for any such development
- before determining an application for express consent to display an advertisement within the district council area
- in the event that regulations made by DOE to govern applications for consent for the presence of a hazardous substance on land require DOE to consult the district council for the area in which the land is situated before granting such consent.

## The relevant district council must be consulted by DSD in the following circumstances:

- before preparing a development scheme for the development, redevelopment or improvement of an area as a whole, where

- that area falls wholly or partly within the district council area
- before acquiring for planning purposes land falling wholly or partly within the district council area.

Failure to undertake a mandatory consultation will be grounds for challenging any decision by way of judicial review. Failure to consult the district council will not prevent an applicant from appealing against non-determination within the statutory two-month period, or further agreed period. In practice, the PAC will expect the Department to seek the council's views before the appeal is heard.

Note that, where an applicant changes a planning application materially after the district council has made its representations in response to consultation but before the application is determined, DOE should allow the council an opportunity to make representations on the revised proposal.

Strictly speaking, there is nothing to prevent DOE or any other government department from taking on board the views of the relevant district council on any aspect of the planning process, provided that weight is given only to views which amount to legally material considerations. More regularly the DOE may properly choose to consult the district council in the following circumstances:

- in the course of preparing Planning Policy Statements, or other policy documents;
- before deciding an application for a determination as to whether an application for planning permission relates to development subject to the environmental impact assessment procedure
- where it feels that the insights of the council's Environmental Health Department may be helpful in determining applications for full or outline planning permission

This last form of consultation is non-statutory and currently undertaken on an informal basis. DOE sends out a standard form letter advising that an application has been made, and including the following information:

- the location of the proposed development
- the Ordnance Survey Sheet Number and Grid Reference
- the nature of the proposed development

- the type of permission sought
- the name of the applicant
- the name and address of any agent employed by the applicant
- the date of the application

Enclosed with the letter are copies of the application itself, drawings, and any relevant supporting documentation.

The letter asks that the Environmental Health Department furnish its comments by a given date in the space provided and returning the letter to the local Planning Office. It also makes plain that where the application goes to appeal a copy of the reply will be provided to the appellant or his agent, if requested. It is essential, that any other representation made by the council should be consistent with the comments of the Environmental Health Department, as inconsistencies will inevitably be exploited by the appellant and his advisers.

Obviously, the district council need not be consulted where there is no specific duty on DOE to do so. More particularly, it has been decided that DOE need not consult the relevant district council where an applicant appeals against the refusal of planning permission. This is of little consequence, as it does not prevent the relevant district council from making representations to the Planning Appeals Commission in the course of the appeal process.

## Recycling and Waste Management

Waste Management is now a critical issue for local authorities with significant financial as well as environmental implications. The Landfill Directive stipulates that 25% of biodegradable municipal waste must be diverted from landfill by 2010. The figure rises to 50% by 2013. Councils are trying to meet their new waste management obligations in a number of ways such as encouraging people to reduce, re-use and recycle.

Current waste management policies encourage a shift in waste management practices 'up the hierarchy', which has five levels:

- Reduce – through the avoidance or minimisation of waste



- Re-use – by putting material into use to delay entry into the waste stream
- Recycle – by reprocessing into new raw materials or products
- Recovery – by using energy from waste products through incineration
- Disposal – the least desirable option.

Councils operate in line with the Best Practical Environmental Option (BEPO) and, where appropriate, the Best Available Technology not Entailing Excessive Costs (BATNEEC). This is achieved through developing and implementing:

- Local and regional integrated waste management strategies
- Waste management plans
- Enforcement policies / procedures
- Recycling initiatives
- Public consultations processes
- Resource management plans.

In Litter Control the council ensures that standards of litter control practices are in accordance with regulations and the Litter Code for Northern Ireland by establishing arrangements for the cleaning of roads, footpaths and council property, together with litter prevention / education and enforcement activities.

## Review of Public Administration (RPA)

Perhaps the most fundamental issue facing the local government sector is the Review of Public Administration which was set up by the Northern Ireland Executive in 2002 to consider how the public sector should be administered. A consultation document was issued in March 2005 and views are currently being sought from as many individuals and organisations as possible.

The consultation document envisages a regional tier of government including the Assembly, government departments and regional authorities which would focus on policy development, setting standards and delivering regional services.

A second, or sub-regional, tier would include councils, health bodies and sub-regional delivery units of the regional bodies.

The document refers to local government as the bedrock of a reformed and streamlined system of public administration. Councils would have increased powers and a strong civic leadership role.

Regarding the number and size of councils three options were given, based on seven, 11 and 15 councils. The consultation document states that the seven-council option would be the most efficient for service delivery and would provide strong collaboration for community planning, but may not adequately reflect local identity. To address this issue there would be a number of “civic councils” with members representing particular areas.

The 11-council option would be less effective for collaborative working and there would be some loss of economies of scale compared with the seven-council model, but it would be better in reflecting local identity.

The 15-council option would be the strongest for preserving local identity but would be less efficient in achieving economies of scale.

For each of the options, the consultation document shows three possible configurations of councils – a total of nine scenarios.

The document also considers other issues including statutory checks and balances on the way councils operate, the dual mandate, remuneration and conditions of service for councillors, and local government finance.

An invaluable source of information is the RPA website, [www.rpani.gov.uk](http://www.rpani.gov.uk)

## Single Status

Historically, local government, like many other parts of the public sector, determined the conditions of employment for various types of employees separately. Within this fragmented structure of negotiation the two biggest groups were the Administrative, Professional, Technical and Clerical (APT&C) staff and the Manual Workers. The employers (councils) and

trade unions representing council employees agreed in 1997 to amalgamate these groups into a single negotiating body.

This harmonisation of terms and conditions of employment was to be brought about by the Single Status Agreement. The intention is for all employees covered by this single negotiating body (probably over 95% of council employees in Northern Ireland) to have a common set of conditions of employment and a common pay and grading structure, rather than the separate ones that had previously existed.

A number of difficult issues which councils had been unable to resolve locally were referred to the Northern Ireland Joint Council (NIJC). The NIJC was asked to produce advice to councils on how to deal with developing single pay and grading arrangements and to do this on a joint basis between the employers' and trade union sides. After some years of very difficult discussions, the NIJC agreed Joint Advice in March 2004.

In addition, due to concerns across England, Wales and Northern Ireland about the slow progress in putting single, common grading structures in place at local level, the 2004 national agreement included further provisions to speed the process. These included provisions that local negotiations should be completed by no later than March 2006, and agreements implemented no later than March 2007.

### **The local negotiations should include agreement on the following matters:**

- A new pay and grading structure
- The approach to be taken to determine the relative sizes of the jobs included (e.g. job evaluation)
- Protection against loss of remuneration
- Premium rates (working beyond the full-time equivalent hours for the period in question, on Saturday or Sunday, at night, sleeping-in duty, public Holidays, shift work, in the evening, on free or rest days, following recall to work, on standby, on split shifts or split duties, on an irregular hours basis, managing evening lettings)
- Pay progression
- Back pay
- Appeals against assimilation proposals
- Equality Impact Assessment of proposed changes to grading, pay and other conditions
- Equal Pay Audit where local pay reviews have been completed without such an audit
- Bonus and other performance payments
- Any cost savings or productivity improvements required to offset implementation costs
- Timetable for implementation by 31 March 2007

# 5. Personal Development

## 5. Personal Development

The role of a local elected representative is multi-faceted and involves using a unique set of skills. You will be expected to:

- Engage with the local community and keep up-to-date with local issues
- Provide a voice for all sections of the community
- Mediate between individuals and organisations
- Campaign on behalf of the council or individuals
- Make informed decisions
- Assist in managing public funds and providing Best Value.

This section will help you develop your essential skills base and become a more effective councillor. Skills are explored in the following areas:

### Communication Listening

Assertiveness  
Networking  
Influencing and persuading others  
Negotiation  
Speaking in council  
Presentations and public speaking

### Processing Information

Efficient reading  
Note-taking  
Approving minutes

### Policy and Decision-Making

Policy-making  
Decision-making

### Managing Budgets

Managing budgets

### People Management

Recruitment and selection  
Delegation and empowerment

### Utilising the Media

Press releases  
Newspaper interviews  
Radio interviews

Television interviews  
General tips for interviews

### Time Management

Time management

### Communication

Successful communicators can adapt the style of their delivery to suit the context in which they are conveying their message. Learning communication techniques will help you to listen attentively, understand the viewpoints of others, and effectively convey the content of, and intentions behind, your own message.

It is useful to keep two-way channels of communication open by ensuring you are available to all sections of the community for consultation and to speak with your constituents regularly to discover local problems and provide feedback on council activities.

### Listening

Much of your political work will involve listening to your electorate, fellow councillors, council officers and other partners to glean important information. A successful elected member seeks out and listens to others' views, as those with an opposite perspective may have information unknown to you that may alter your thinking. Listen actively during discussions and ask questions to check your understanding and interpretation. Try to be objective and rigorous in evaluating information, and ask for simple explanations of complex situations.

Citizens with a query or problem, many of whom may be upset or angry, will frequently approach you. In these situations you may find it helpful to:

- Note details about the problem, the individuals / organisations involved and the date on which you are having the conversation
- Acknowledge the person's distress, and listen carefully and with empathy
- Pay attention to the person's tone of voice and body language
- Try not to interrupt or finish the other



person's sentences as this gives the impression that what you have to say is more important

- If the problem is a complaint related to the council, be sure that the complaint is justified before admitting liability
- Ensure that you are the correct person to deal with the issue before advising the person of the action to be taken. If not, provide an alternative avenue for the person to explore.

An individual's non-verbal language may conflict with their verbal language, and is usually the most accurate reflection of how they feel. You can show people you are listening to them through your body language by:

- Keeping appropriate eye contact
- Smiling and nodding when appropriate
- Stopping what you are doing when someone starts talking to you.

If you would like to obtain further training, a course entitled 'Effective communication through listening and questioning skills', is offered by the Samaritans (see [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk) for further information)

## Assertiveness

Key features of assertiveness include communicating confidently in a balanced tone without becoming aggressive, demonstrating a respect for others' views without losing sight of your own position and standing firm on important issues while co-operating on areas of agreement. The ability to be assertive is essential to civic leadership, as it avoids the use of unmeasured and emotive communication that can distract the listener from the content of the message.

Individuals who fail to be assertive are likely to behave either:

- Aggressively, becoming over-directive
- Passively, avoiding confrontation
- Manipulatively, using influence to force others.

Assertion requires an individual to be both rational and sensitive, and is characterised by qualities such as directness, tolerance, and firmness.

To sound more assertive when you speak, you could try:

- Speaking slowly, clearly and in short sentences to enhance clarity and impact
- Structuring your speech, and using a summary to emphasise your main message
- Linking your message to others' contributions to the conversation
- Being aware of creating positive body language (see Public Speaking section below)
- Staying calm in disagreements, and stressing points of agreement to allow those present to find a way forward
- Questioning those in authority, and challenging the use of exclusive jargon
- Viewing criticism from others as constructive, and not as a personal attack
- Ensuring that you don't dominate the conversation, by actively encouraging others to express their views.

## Networking

Successful networking creates close links between public representatives and other community stakeholders such as the police, health and education services, voluntary and business organisations and QUANGOs, and can provide a wider web of political contacts with whom to exchange ideas, including councillors from other areas and local MLAs.

Networking involves building and maintaining relationships with people who have similar interests or agendas, or whose acquaintance could bring advantages and opportunities. However, in a culture where people are often reluctant to discuss their own expertise, networking in a forceful manner can provoke a negative interpretation that an individual is 'using' others for their personal gain.

Attributes of a good networker include:

- Keeping in touch unprompted, but without bothering contacts unnecessarily
- Making contacts on others' behalf
- Giving time without expectation of return
- Treating others fairly
- Feeling comfortable with asking for what you want
- Keeping promises

While waiting to begin a meeting or attending a council function, you could employ some

of the following communication techniques to generate useful contacts by creating a sense of trust:

- Show you are listening
- Offer help and suggestions
- Don't bore others with your personal details
- Show interest in others' personal details
- Say what you mean clearly and concisely
- Maintain a modicum of modesty and humility
- Be aware of the impact of what you are saying and the attention span of others
- Be aware of the impact of your council's agenda
- Be polite and know how to end conversations without causing offence

Spending time with experienced colleagues can help you to meet key local government stakeholders, but for a more strategic approach towards meeting people who can help you achieve your objectives you may also like to try:

- Contacting the main government, charity and business organisations in your area and introducing yourself with a short letter
- Finding out the names of key people in the public sector (fellow councillors, chairs and Chief Executives of important groups and organisations, local businesspeople) to provide you with a contact name for telephone enquiries. When you are attending a meeting with several people you have not met before, you may wish to look at their organisations' websites to check for photographs so you can match names to faces in advance
- Going to community social events such as school fetes, to increase your visibility and meet local people in relaxed surroundings.

The officers in your council may be able to provide you with details about how your council expects elected members to deal with relationships inside the organisation and protocols on establishing external partnership arrangements.

## Influencing and Persuading Others

Influence is the ability to persuade others to change their opinion or course of action, requiring an understanding of the other party's position, the ability to listen to this perspective

and the preparation and presentation of a rationale for change.

To persuade others to change their views without causing conflict or resentment, creating a win/win situation, you need to build good working relationships so that others are receptive to your suggestions. Presenting ideas logically and truthfully is essential for conveying your meaning. Influence is not about manipulation or misuse of power, but instead should be supported by positive persuading behaviours so that other people feel good about interacting with you.

## To influence positively:

- Plan - set clear objectives and determine how to achieve them
- Prepare - consider any possible obstacles
- Communicate - sell persuasively by emphasising positives rather than denying negatives
- Assert yourself - be confident in your view while maintaining a good relationship.

Professor Gary Orren, John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, recommends using the following methods of persuasion in your speech:

- Consider the effect of your message content, your perceived credibility as speaker and your surroundings on the established motives, attitudes and knowledge of the audience
- Keep the message simple, comprehensible and memorable
- Research your audience and show empathy for their situation
- Keep your points relevant to the discussion
- Use analogies or metaphors (correctly!) to exploit familiar concepts
- Use stories, examples or demonstrations to capture attention and let listeners interpret the message in their own terms
- Ask the audience to provide small initial commitments
- Repeat key lines to increase retention
- Have conviction in knowledge - people are persuaded by those perceived to be an authority
- Express your message as a social norm - people are persuaded by real or imagined group pressure
- Use reciprocity - i.e. express appreciation

- and acknowledgment of others' positions, use concessionary language which doesn't compromise authoritativeness where possible, etc
- Self-deprecating humour provides vulnerability, interest, and is a mild form of concession
  - Consider whether your audience has any genuinely admirable or similar qualities - we are apt to be influenced by people who like and are similar to us, and with whom we have pleasant associations. Link your ideas to something the audience will feel positive about
  - Opportunities seem valuable when their availability is limited - couch your argument in terms of what your audience stands to lose and state information that is scarce, new or exclusive early in a persuasion message
  - Personalise your message - relate it to a situation your audience may have experienced.

## Negotiation

Negotiation involves a meeting between two parties, with the aim of reaching an agreement over an important issue that may involve conflict between the parties and requires them to work together to achieve their objective. Negotiation need not create a winning and losing party; in every negotiation there are opportunities to use social skills and effective communication creatively to bring both participants towards a positive outcome in their mutual interest. Like many aspects of communication, approaching the issue from the correct point of view can enhance the negotiation process.

In the negotiation process, identify:

- Your ideal outcome and 'fall-back' positions
- The other party's situation and likely objectives
- The level of support from your constituents.

Successful negotiators have prepared how to achieve their objectives in advance, and proactively direct discussions towards achieving their objectives rather than merely reacting to the other party's proposals. The best strategy will be effective in the context of the negotiating situation itself.

Consider:

- How can you change the other party's exceptions?
- How can you get information from them, e.g. their commitment to their objectives
- How can you increase your bargaining power? By pre-negotiation conditioning?
- What sort of strategies can you use to obtain your objectives and counter theirs?

Once you have determined your objectives, your broad strategy and your relative bargaining power, you should decide upon the tactics you would use to approach the negotiation itself:

- Do you put your demands on the table or let the other party draw these out?
- Which side do you want to chair the meeting?
- Do you have the technical know-how and skills to negotiate effectively on the issues? Where can you get support in this area if necessary?

Having identified and agreed the purpose, process, time constraints, and positions of each party at the beginning of the meeting, you need to decide upon the direction and strength of your negotiation style.

**'Direction'** = the way you handle information. You can push: give information, make proposals, ignore others' contributions, criticise, and act as an irritator. Or you can pull: ask questions, ask for suggestions, check understanding, ask for clarification, and state your feelings. Both are valid tactics, dependent on the nature and context of the negotiation.

**'Strength'** = the flexibility used in moving from your initial position. You can adopt a 'hard' line, to win at all costs without conceding, retracting, or accepting offers! Or you can adopt a 'soft' line, willing to concede and accommodate, wavering, or saying "no" with difficulty. You may take a 'hard' line on some issues and 'soft' on others, which gives a clear indication of preferred outcomes.

Before closing negotiations, remember to check if everyone is clear on what has been agreed or if points need to be clarified, check if everyone feels the agreement is fair and check

that all parties are committed to implementing the agreement.

Remember the following key points about the negotiation process:

- Consider the other party's point of view first
- Try to work towards a win/win situation; both parties must live with the agreement made
- Effective negotiation needs careful preparation - identify ideal outcomes and realistic settlements and fall-back positions
- Your strategy should be flexible to allow you to build on creative options which may arise
- Look for an area of agreement between the parties
- Identify hidden agendas and match them with your search towards satisfactory agreement
- Check that everyone knows what is agreed and takes responsibility for further action
- Review your performance and identify how tasks and processes can be improved.

## Speaking in Council

Councillors' effective participation during meetings is vital for the progression of council projects and issues; however, if handled improperly, meetings can be a waste of councillors' time and effort, and lead to delays. It is crucial therefore that councillors gain experience and develop skills in presenting their positions to full council and committee meetings.

In 'How to make meetings work' (London, Kogan Page, 1989), Malcolm Peel lists the following common reasons for ineffective use of time during meetings:

- Unnecessary attendance
- Failing to prepare
- Poor discussion tactics
- Ineffective communication
- Personality problems
- Procedural error

Peel lists the following tips for participants to ensure that their presence at meetings will be valued:

- Read agendas and relevant papers in advance to prepare for the discussion
- Arrive on time where possible, so that you feel comfortable to contribute
- Ensure that the Chair facilitates the

discussion and involves all parties

- Appoint a minute-taker, and take brief personal notes of important points
- Agree responsibility for action arising from decisions
- Review the progress of actions decided in subsequent meetings

It may be a new experience for you to speak in a council meeting. Although you may feel uncertain or nervous in the early days, even the most experienced councillors have had the same feelings. Committee meetings are the best place to make a start, as they are less formal and controlled than the full council meeting where members are careful to follow Standing Orders.

Occasionally, you may wish to have a particular piece of business discussed at a meeting. You should approach the Chief Executive or Chair about this, remembering that:

- council staff need to know before a certain deadline each month if they are to include an additional item, so contact them early
- the item must be within the committee's terms of reference
- it may be possible to deal with the matter at officer level before or instead of bringing it to the committee, allowing for decision-making at the lowest level possible. Often it may be in the public interest to have quick officer action rather than to wait for a meeting
- waiting to bring up an item under the 'any other business' section can mean that officers have had little time to prepare advice and other councillors have not formulated viewpoints; however if urgent action is required this is occasionally acceptable.

It is important when framing a proposal that your meaning is expressed clearly and the proposal is self-explanatory. In cases of poor practice suggestions on proposals are often not precise, hence the participants rely on the Committee Clerk to compose a minute that reflects the decision made and which can be the basis of action. It is therefore advisable for the Chair to summarise decisions made for the benefit of both members and the Committee Clerk.



It is perfectly proper and often advisable to seek the help of professional staff when wording a proposal. Frequently, when dealing with routine, minor or uncontentious matters, decisions can be made via general agreement, bypassing the need for a proposer and seconder. This simply appears in the minutes in a form such as "It was agreed that ... ."

Some experienced councillors have offered general advice on speaking at council:

- At early meetings, study the general procedures and atmosphere. Check if any standing orders limit you in any way, for example speaking only once to a particular motion
- To begin with, use simple notes and comment on less controversial items until you get more accustomed to speaking in debate and hearing the sound of your own voice
- Speak infrequently, briefly and to the point - used repeatedly this method gains support
- Avoid making too many points at once - be clear on a few central facts
- In formal full council meetings, use the central principle of debating by speaking to the motion. When a series of amendments arise, stick to the topic under discussion
- Use questions to your advantage. Questions can be genuine requests for information or clarification, or publicity ploys. Questions should not be used to publicly embarrass an officer, instead raise concerns about administrative matters with the Chief Executive privately; if you fail to get a satisfactory answer, consider raising it at a meeting
- Clearly signal your intention to speak to the Chair, as a number of people will be competing for his or her attention. If there is an item on the agenda about which you particularly want to speak, you could mention this to the Chair before the meeting.

## Presentations and Public Speaking

As a councillor, you will certainly be required to briefly address and/or give informative presentations to audiences which may be large in number, perhaps made up of representatives from external organisations or the general public. The section that follows provides basic

guidance on presentation techniques, from preparation through to entering the venue and finally the delivery of your message.

When alerted to danger, the body calls for more oxygen, causing increases in breathing and heart rates. The key to controlling nerves lies in the reverse situation: when our breathing and heart rates start to drop (for example by controlling breathing) our body is sent a calming signal and assumes that danger is passing. Remember that stress signals are released to help your body perform at the optimum level, and once controlled can actually prove beneficial. Planning ahead will ensure that your confidence is maintained to allow you to deliver efficient presentations while you develop experience with further practice.

Before the event, and when composing your presentation, be sure to:

- Include the key points which your audience should retain
- Consider the complexity of the subject and the level of depth you should go into - this is related to the audience's prior knowledge and expectations
- Consider the audience's likely interests, motivations and age - this will affect your tone and the level of humour etc that is appropriate
- Follow an attention-grabbing opening with a logically structured argument
- Liaise with those who invited you to speak to ensure that the duration of your presentation is appropriate for the event's agenda
- Consider the room's layout and setting - this affects how you might enter the room or rise to speak; the acoustics; whether visual aids can be seen clearly; power facilities, etc
- Enquire about the appropriate level of formality in your dress and the language you use
- Consider the supporting materials for your presentation - are handouts for the audience required; what form of personal notes should you prepare and bring with you?

## Enter with confidence

- Grab the audience's attention and disguise any nerves by appearing confident; stand straight with your head held high and look around at your audience, making eye contact.

## Stand or sit correctly

- Practice a good speaking posture, standing straight, facing the audience with feet roughly shoulder-width apart and in parallel with your shoulders to create a stable yet relaxed platform. This posture facilitates clear speaking and sends positive non-verbal signals
- Don't lean into or over a podium as this will make you seem nervous and unconvincing
- Avoid shifting from foot to foot while standing as this suggests you have something to hide
- If you are sitting, don't put your weight to one side or cross your legs as it provides the impression that you are unbalanced, or unsure of what you are saying.

## Breathe deeply

- Adopt the correct posture above and try breathing in and out slowly with your hand on your abdomen to feel it rise as you breathe in, and fall as you breathe out. If this is not happening in a marked way you are probably breathing too shallowly.

## Use eye contact

- Eye contact connects you to the audience, holds attention and makes you appear sincere
- Look around the room, into the corners and front and back rows of the audience, as momentarily catching people's eyes will keep them interested and listening.

## Use your voice

- Practice delivering your presentation several times before the event. This will increase your recall of the presentation's

content, reducing your reliance on notes and facilitating a more natural voice for delivery as opposed to a false reading voice

- As your message is important, project your voice! Projection depends on your supply of air, clear consonants, giving it some "oomph" or energy, and confidence. Breathe deeply, lift your head to avoid mumbling, and believe in what you are saying!
- Vary the pace, tone, rhythm and volume of your voice to keep to your audience's attention. Allow your voice to rise and fall naturally, and try to inject enthusiasm and emotion
- Use pauses:
  - To make a point or announcement dramatically
  - After posing a rhetorical question (i.e. one which you do not expect the audience to answer, as you will provide the answer yourself)
  - For good timing when using humour
  - To provide time for you to think
  - To allow the audience to reflect, gather their thoughts, break from concentration
- Keep your delivery strong throughout; don't be tempted to speed up towards the end.

## Use hand and arm gestures to emphasise your point

- To get the audience to agree with you, open your arms in an expansive gesture
- A downward gesture will reinforce the point you want to get across
- Outstretching your hand and smiling in an 'over to you' gesture at the end will indicate to your audience that you have finished speaking and expect a positive response.

If you are not comfortable with public speaking and are troubled by nerves, there are ways to control signals of nervousness until you learn to master your fears:

Problem:	Solution:
Voice tremor	This is caused by tension tightening your throat and constricting your lungs. Maintain the deep breathing exercise until you have to speak, e.g. while you are waiting to be introduced, to relax the body and provide a better supply of air to sustain speech.
Shaking hands	Again, breathing exercises will help you to relax. If you are conscious that your audience may notice and be distracted by your shaking hands, avoid holding paper or pens that exaggerate movement. Microphones can amplify rustling papers so leave these on a podium, or use heavy paper.
Reddening	This is caused by an increase in blood pressure as a stress reaction, which is again eased by deep breathing. A rash usually starts with the opening of a presentation, so breathing exercises should begin before you start.
Dry mouth	This common reaction can be improved by drinking still water, which you should bring with you and drink before you need it.

The real secret in controlling nerves is in the confidence that stems from good preparation. When you have the opportunity, watch top orators in action and practice their techniques on family and friends who will no doubt provide you with honest and constructive criticism in safe surroundings.

## Processing Information

At some point, most elected members will find themselves inundated with lengthy documents detailing issues which may be unfamiliar, technically complex or politically sensitive, which they are required to process in a limited period of time to assist with decision-making as a member or representative of the council. The sections that follow provide basic tips on improving comprehension, absorption and retention of key points in the face of 'information overload'.

## Efficient Reading

Understanding what you read is the key to becoming better informed. Using several easy concentration techniques, you can increase your reading speed. A commonly held misconception that reading a passage slowly or reading it twice (called 'regression') leads to greater understanding means that many people read inefficiently. Reading slowly has no effect on comprehension, while regression halves speed but improves comprehension by

only around 3-7%. Eliminate regression, and your reading speed will rise with no loss of comprehension.

'Skim' or 'speed' reading can allow you to grasp a simple level of understanding of a large document within a short time. In normal reading, the eyes make small, swift movements between blocks of words, resting briefly on each group. The reader may not always proceed from one block of words to the next, but occasionally skip back to a preceding block if they are uncertain about something, interrupting the forward flow of reading. The period of time during which the eye rests on one group is called a 'fixation'; to read faster, enlarge the groups and accelerate the move from one group to another.

The object of learning to read more quickly is to raise your maximum speed without lowering your standard of comprehension. Nevertheless, reading and understanding at a faster rate is valueless if you forget what has been read, so you may need to develop your memory skills. Memory is strongest after a few minutes, and up to 80% of read material is forgotten within 24 hours. An effective way to absorb information is to read for an hour, wait for a tenth of the time spent studying (6 minutes), review what you have studied, and then wait for 10 times the study period (in this instance 10 hours) before you review again.

## Remember these tips about efficient reading:

- Powers of comprehension are usually overestimated
- Lots of information can be picked up from illustrations and other visual material at a glance
- Speed-reading can be learnt on a course or from books, and will make you familiar with where to find the most important information within established document structures
- Time can be saved by looking at a document's contents, introductory pages, conclusion and index, to check which sections are worth reading
- Pages should be scanned down the centre, or diagonally, to glean the most information quickly
- To reduce 'skip-backs' try using a pointer as your eyes follow it, smoothing your reading flow. Train yourself to decrease the length of time your pointer rests on each fixation
- Use a highlighter to indicate important sections that you wish to draw attention to in meetings or review at a later stage
- Memory can be improved by changing the way you learn and reviewing knowledge regularly.

## Note-Taking

To support your memory of meeting discussions, it is advisable to experiment with ways of recording speech or condensing written communication to find a suitable note-taking method:

- **Linear notes:** When jotting down speech, don't try to record words in longhand and in sequence or you won't keep up. Listen to what is being said and note key points with a succinct explanation of each, using headings and numbers to structure your notes.
- **Speedwriting:** There are classes for learning shorthand, but you can also teach yourself to double your writing speed. Generally, drop vowels unless they begin a word, use numerals (3 not three) and standard abbreviations such as '&' for 'and'. Use special abbreviations for common words or word parts e.g. 'v' (very), 'g' (-ing), 'govt' (government).

- **Mind maps:** Tony Buzan devised these as a way of making visual notes. Write down a key word or phrase, or draw an image in the middle of a page as the subject of the Mind Map. As you make notes, create 'branches' from this central point. Each branch can have sub-branches (one idea leading to another), and different branches may link to each other. Use colour and images to illustrate points and to make the Mind Map easier to recall.

It may also be helpful to emphasise key points with highlighters and read over notes following meetings while what you have recorded is fresh in your mind.

## Approving Minutes

Good minutes are clear, concise and cover key points arising from the meeting. They should represent the overall decision of the committee or council, as opposed to a record of individual members' personal views (unless specifically requested by the councillor). A certain level of description is needed but this should be brief, to the point, and include only essential information.

When assessing the minutes of a previous meeting, consider the content of the minutes against your memory of the proceedings in terms of the following:

- Do the minutes correctly note the date and venue of the meeting?
- Do the minutes correctly record who was present and who chaired the meeting?
- Was the decision of the council or committee accurately recorded? This is important because it is the basis for action by the officers
- Would someone with limited knowledge of the subject easily understand the minute?
- Do the minutes omit essential facts or include material that has no relevance?

## Policy and Decision-Making

Policies are courses or principles of action proposed or adopted by, for example, a council. Creating and evolving policies involves establishing what needs to be done, working out how to do it and reviewing outcomes regularly. Councils need to develop



policies in an increasingly demanding, evolving and sophisticated world. Key policy issues are connected and cannot be tackled effectively by departments acting individually.

Councillors can influence policies through:

- Council and committee positions
- As employers of council staff
- As members of partnership boards
- As members of boards of voluntary bodies
- As members of a political group
- When undertaking casework

## Policy-Making

OFMDFM's publication "A Practical Guide to Policy Making in Northern Ireland" identifies the features of good policy-making:

1. Forward looking - defines outcomes that the policy is designed to achieve and takes a long-term view based on statistical trends and informed social, economic, political and cultural trends at least five years into the effect of the policy. A forward looking approach is demonstrated by:
  - A statement of intended outcomes
  - Contingency planning
  - Taking long-term strategy into account
2. Outward looking - takes account of influencing factors in regional, national, EU and international situations, and draws on experience in other countries e.g.
  - Makes use of EU mechanisms
  - Looks at how other countries dealt with similar issues
  - Recognises variation within NI.
3. Innovative, flexible and creative - questions established ways, encourages new and creative ideas, and is open to comments and suggestions e.g.
  - Using alternatives to the usual ways of working
  - Defining success in terms of outcomes
  - Assessing and managing risk
  - Creating management structures to promote team working
  - Bringing in people from outside.
4. Evidence-based - decisions are based on evidence from wide range of sources, in an accessible and meaningful form with all stakeholders involved at an early stage e.g.

- Reviews existing research - experts, internet, professionals, front-line, bench marking, legal advice
- Commissions new research
- Consults expert opinion
- Considers range of properly costed options.

5. Inclusive - takes account of policy impacts and the needs of those affected e.g.
  - Consults those responsible for service delivery
  - Consults those affected
  - Undertakes impact assessments
  - Seeks feedback.
6. Joined-up - takes a holistic view beyond institutional boundaries to develop strategic objectives and establish ethical, moral and legal bases for policy. Considers appropriate organisational structures in order to achieve cross-cutting objectives
  - Cross-cutting objectives defined at outset
  - Defines joint working arrangements
  - Strategies are in place to remove barriers to joining up
  - Implementation is seen as part of the policy process.
7. Learns lessons - experience is used to aid improvement e.g.
  - Information on lessons learned and good practice is disseminated
  - Failed policies are rectified.
8. Communicates to the public - a strategy is prepared and implemented for the communication of policy to the public.
9. Evaluates and reviews - Systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of policy should be built into the process, e.g.
  - Success criteria is defined
  - Use of pilot schemes
  - Feedback mechanisms are developed
  - Ongoing reviews use meaningful performance measures.

## Key stages in the policy-making process include:

1. Identification of need for a review of and/or new policy
2. Outline terms of reference composed

3. Establishment of steering group or working parties
4. Finalisation of terms of reference
5. Policy development (involving research, data collection, steering group meetings, stakeholder consultation, evidence consideration)
6. Initial appraisal and policy formulation
7. Production and issue of options paper or consultation document
8. Consultation period (designed to develop solutions that gain acceptance in practice)
9. Policy recommendations made to council or appropriate committee
10. Agreement and issue of policy document
11. Implementation
12. Review and evaluation.

Overarching council strategies should be consistent and flexible, identifying what needs to be delivered but able to exploit and adapt to change. Council policy should anticipate and interact with environmental conditions, rather than merely responding to change.

### **The organisational objectives of a council should therefore ideally be:**

- Creative and balanced - inspiring commitment but not remote from everyday activities
- Challenging - requiring effort to reach them, but nevertheless achievable
- Defined but not cast in stone - allowing flexibility in the light of circumstances.

### **Decision-Making**

The ability to make clear, firm and timely decisions is an essential leadership quality and as the type of decision needed varies according to circumstances; it is advisable to learn to recognise the implications of making each type of decision. Taking decisive action does not mean making decisions on the spur of the moment, although this may be necessary in an emergency and occasionally desirable if the right decision is obvious. Leaders must approach decisions confidently, aware of what to consider and in command of the process:

- Understand what kind of decision is required from you, and do not be afraid to change the decision if circumstances

subsequently alter

- Do not make a decision immediately unless the solution is obvious. Study all the options open to you and weigh up all the pros and cons
- Never try to make important decisions when you are under extreme time pressure.

It is important to assess whether decisions can be made quickly or can wait. Good decision-makers often make instant decisions, but they then assess the long-term implications.

Committees are a means to an end - that of making good decisions - and are only needed if the volume of work justifies their continued existence. Some smaller councils can conduct business without a formal committee system as their council meetings are both economical and efficient. Larger councils cannot operate in this way, but should regularly assess which committees are needed.

Through using committees, council work is shared and carried out in a more relaxed and informal atmosphere, allowing more detailed discussion and debate about council affairs and free exchange between councillors. As the council must remain in overall control, it is normal practice for each committee to report monthly to full council and committee reports usually form the main part of the council agenda.

Full council meetings tend as a consequence to be more formal and less lengthy. The most common method of reporting committee business is simply by submitting the minutes of each meeting for approval or information. Since council meetings are conducted with greater formality you will find they are usually governed closely by Standing Orders.

To gain a breadth of experience in council business over your term, you may be able to seek membership of different committees to build up a picture of the council's work as a whole. Some councils permit members to attend committees which they are not members of as a useful way to gather knowledge; however you should check with the Chief Executive about practice in your own council before doing so.

## Managing Budgets

Councils assess whether they have achieved their policy objectives by measuring performance against budgets, which are plans for income and expenditure over a defined period that are approved in advance. The financial year runs from 1 April to 31 March, so upon your election the budgets for that year will already be agreed. However you can gain experience in monitoring budgets during your first year (Reference section iii contains a glossary of financial terms to help you to understand local government accounting processes). Decisions on expenditure are based on improving the way in which the budget is currently spent by and across council departments, and are often political as well as policy-led.

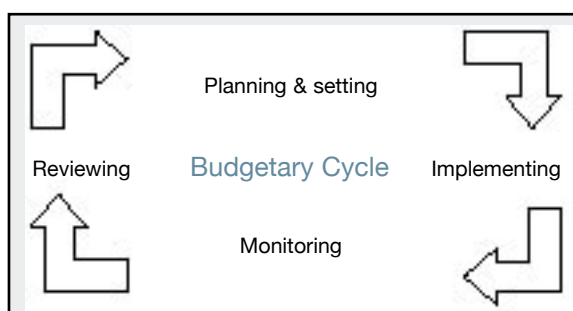
Budgets are useful tools for:

- Forecasting future demands
- Monitoring and controlling spending
- Identifying gaps in provisions.

For budgets to be effective, it is required that:

- The appropriate employees and councillors are involved in setting the budget
- Budget targets are achievable
- The budget is monitored regularly, at least on a monthly basis
- Action is taken to mistaken estimates in the budget within the budgetary period
- Lessons should be learnt and retained for setting the next year's budget.

Planning the budget takes part at both corporate and individual service level. Normal practice is for the Directors or Heads of Services to work with the Finance Officer and Chief Executive to produce budget proposals to be presented to council. These must be approved by a statutory date each year.



## Recruitment and Selection

The most valuable resource councils have is their employees and, as local government is a labour intensive sector, it is vital that you develop skills in managing relations with the officers that you may encounter on regular basis.

Proper management principles require that any employee should only have one boss to whom he or she is responsible to avoid confusion where different people are asking for different responses. Accordingly individual councillors may not instruct members of staff but if they believe something is not being done properly they should raise the matter with the Chief Executive or Director of the relevant department.

Recruitment and selection procedures in local government are set by the Local Government Staff Commission and provide that, apart from the highest levels of posts, the process involves officers only. Councillors are, however, involved in the appointment to Chief Executive, Director and some other senior posts.

The recruitment and selection process should comply with best practice to ensure that the right people are selected for all jobs. The process must be seen as fair and equal to all applicants and at the same time a positive image of the council as a good employer should be projected.

The main legal framework that underlies recruitment and selection processes refers to the:

- Fair Employment and Treatment Order 1998 (which deals with perceived religious affiliation and/or political opinion)
- Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 (gender and marital status)
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Equality (Disability etc) Order (NI) 2000 (disabilities)
- Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 (race, colour, nationality, citizenship, ethnic origin)
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2003 (sexual orientation).

In addition, Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities to have

due regard to the need to promote equality:

- Between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation
- Between men and woman generally
- Between persons with a disability and those without
- Between persons with dependants and those without.

It is essential that you receive training on equal opportunity based recruitment and selection before taking part in any appointment exercise. The main steps in the recruitment and selection process are:



Interviewing involves the collection of information about the candidates, while the candidates will be collecting information about the organisation, the department and the job.



Three main models for interview questioning are:

- Behavioural – asking how applicants behaved in similar situations in the past. For example, “Tell me about a time when....”
- Situational - where candidates are asked hypothetical questions to determine what they would do. For example, “How would you deal with...?”
- Assessment of competence – where job related skills are assessed against pre-determined criteria to focus on whether the applicant has the key competencies appropriate to the job.

## Utilising the Media

As a new councillor, you are unlikely to be expected to speak on behalf of your council or party at the beginning of your term. However, in the event that a journalist is seeking an unguarded comment from an inexperienced representative (perhaps on a contentious topic), it is advisable to consult your council and party for their guidelines on who is the most appropriate person to speak on the matter. Refer the journalist on to this person if you are unsure whether to comment.

It is advisable to develop good relationships with journalists and photographers, perhaps by supplying them with your contact details, and to take every opportunity to obtain positive coverage. When you have something to say, and are the best person to say it, check your position with other party or council colleagues, and be clear about the message you wish to give.

## Press Releases

If you wish to approach newspapers to have your opinions published and you have established a good working relationship with a reporter, you may be able to discuss the topic with them to gauge their interest. Alternatively, you can issue a press release informing relevant newspapers about the issue.

You should consider any story you want to tell from the perspective of the newspaper, i.e. engaging readers' interests. For instance, the readership of the Belfast newspapers is largely

within the Greater Belfast area and unless a story beyond Belfast has wider appeal it may not be printed.

The following general points apply to press releases for newspapers, radio or television:

- Summarise your story on one sheet of A4 paper. State clearly who you represent at the top of the paper; using a logo where possible
- Use a headline that explains the subject; it is unlikely to be used in the newspaper but should aim to capture the reporter's attention
- Remember that the first paragraph of your press release is the most important, therefore it is not advisable to start immediately with a quote, but you should instead summarise the most newsworthy aspect of the story
- Keep releases easy to read and understandable by using short sentences and simple English. It is also often helpful to send accompanying information, such as photographs with captions, if available
- Use direct quotes from named persons where possible. This is not only more attractive to the newspaper, but also allows for corrections of misquoted remarks
- The media work to deadlines - late news is no news! Find out the last day and time by which relevant newspapers accept material
- E-mail or fax to the newsroom or to a specific journalist, depending on the subject
- You may place an 'embargo' on some pieces, which means that the media may use the material but cannot release the report until after a certain time.

Don't forget to follow up the piece. If it was not used find out why, as this may give you guidance in improving your writing for future press releases.

## Newspaper Interviews

When giving a newspaper interview, again consider the paper's audience: it will be easier to get coverage for local interest stories in local weekly papers than larger publications such as the Belfast Telegraph. It is often useful to find out the expertise of a particular journalist in advance of your interview e.g. a local government specialist may be

approaching the interview from a particular angle.

It might be useful to consider why the newspaper is interested in the story and why they want to talk to you in particular before agreeing to the interview. Again, you may be more comfortable referring the journalist to an individual within your council or party with particular knowledge on the subject as the official spokesperson.

Having agreed to an interview, take some time to think about what you want to say, and how to say it. The length and ease of a newspaper interview is deceptive. Your words will be quoted amongst those of the journalist rather than heard directly as in a radio or television interview; hence it is often more difficult to control. Be clear about where you stand and keep the language of your quotes simple and direct. Stick to communicating the three or four most important things you want to say. If the reporter seems to be missing the point you can try to guide him or her by introducing the important points.

It is advisable to finish speaking on the topic immediately once the interview is over, rather than assuming that the journalist will not note comments that are supposedly 'off the record', (which implies that what is divulged will not be used directly). Similarly, the term 'non-attributable' defines information that is leaked without an identified source. If you choose to use this method take care as there is nothing to stop the journalist identifying you, apart from his or her ethics.

## Radio Interviews

For radio interviews, condense the topic that you wish to speak on. Interviewers will ask what they believe the listeners want to hear and may already know the answers to the questions they pose. Remember that spoken interviews do not follow the same rules as normal conversation, as both sides involved have certain points to make and listeners may not hear the entire interview; hence comments can be taken out of context.

The most important aspects of giving radio interviews are the content and tone of your speech. Radio is an excellent medium for transmitting enthusiasm, sincerity and

conviction, as well as more negative tones. A positive approach will always come over better than a negative one.

One advantage of not being visible is that you can take notes of your main points with you; use these to focus your mind from any distracting activity by production staff. Similar to the caution you should apply to newspaper interviews, always assume that a microphone is live and never say anything that you would not wish to be broadcast.

## Television Interviews

Clean, tidy professional dress is usually recommended for television appearances. It is important to consider the effects of colour as solid colour looks clearer on TV than patterned material. Certain colours also have particular psychological connotations, e.g. yellow is deemed cheerful, while red is seen as aggressive. Remember your posture while you are seated; try to relax and look into the eyes of the interviewer rather than at the camera when delivering your reply. If necessary, hold a piece of paper or other item under a desk or out of camera range to ensure that you do not fidget.

It is often useful to research the format of a programme and the style of the interviewer when the approach of the broadcast has not been made clear. Programmes differ in terms of the amounts of discussion time available, the formats and the target audience. For example, news interviews are usually short, lasting a few minutes at most.

When a controversial or difficult subject is being discussed you may wish to find out:

- Who else is contributing?
- Will there be an audience?
- What will happen before and after the interview?

The answers to these questions may make you reconsider participating. For example, you may be prepared to do an interview but not take part in a discussion, or you might not be prepared to do a recorded interview which follows or is followed by a broadcast that you not be given the opportunity to view.

Having agreed to do an interview you should do some basic preparation:

- Consider what you want to achieve and decide on the three main points that will achieve this
- If the interview is recorded, stick with your three points to ensure your message is communicated after the piece is edited.

During the interview your aim is to ensure that your main points are broadcast. It is not the interviewer's job to ask you the questions that will allow you to make your points, so you must not depend on the interviewer to create opportunities for you to get your message across. Use simple examples to get your message across effectively.

## General Tips for Interviews:

- Using 'yes' or 'no' - if an interviewer summarises or implies a point that strays from your intended meaning, you can quickly and clearly say 'no'. You can follow this with any phrase that identifies the interviewer's views as wrong, untrue, unfair etc
- Dealing with an interviewer's interruptions or an unfair concluding summary - allow one or two interruptions then continue to talk over the other person. Unclear sound often means the interviewer will be asked to back off by the production team. Use interruptions to go back your original points and ignore or draw attention to this behaviour in an impersonal way, rather than using the person's name. Also correct any factual inaccuracy in an impersonal way, as the interviewer is not representing him or herself but the audience.
- Creating time to think - occasionally you may be faced with a difficult question or one that you hadn't considered. Stock phrases may be recognised as a delaying tactic but they can be used to get you out of a difficult situation. For example:
  - "That's a very good question but before I answer that there is another more important question we need to consider"
  - "Before I answer your question directly we need to put it into context"

- "Well that's an interesting question but I'm sure we will gain more insight by considering..."

- Behaviour and attitude - be as natural as you can in a difficult situation. Try to take a positive line, as a defensive or negative attitude can destroy your case. Always seek to make positive points rather than being forced into justification and have the courage to accept complaints or even admit mistakes.
- Think of opening and closing phrases - these stick in an audience's mind, and producers look for good quotes with which to easily begin and end interviews
- For questions which you can't answer - such as those related to legal proceedings, the interviewer may ask you the question anyway to demonstrate that you are unable to address the point. Indicate that you will not be commenting on certain issues before an interview begins
- In cases of poor performance - ask to begin the interview again, or in the case of newspaper interviews, ask for a follow-up piece
- In cases of poor treatment - explain your case through the appropriate lines of authority until it is answered. Normally this will be the reporter / producer, the organisation's head, and ultimately the appropriate ethics body. Refuse to issue information to parties who have treated you poorly or misrepresented you in the past.

## Time Management

We are all liable to misuse time in many ways, and the cumulative effect of time-consuming activities can significantly impact on productivity, which can lead to stress.

Which of these areas are your biggest time wasters?

- Meetings
- Losing things
- Poor organisation
- Junk mail
- Unclear objectives
- Inefficient systems

Symptoms of stress can include:

- Headaches
- Skin problems
- Loss of appetite and indigestion
- Disturbed sleep
- Loss of energy
- Irritability and tension

Being overstressed can mean that you are demotivated, forgetful, unable to concentrate and may suffer in relationships. In worst-case scenarios, some people are apt to panic attacks, tearfulness and depression. It is therefore essential to:

- Recognise warning signs of stress in yourself
- Maintain perspective and balance
- Take steps to prevent or reduce stress.

Use this test to assess whether you are using information effectively or are facing 'information overload', i.e. when the amount of information you receive affects your ability to use it in a meaningful way and within the required time:

1. Do you have enough time to deal with information on the day it is received?
2. Do you know where to find information?
3. Do you think about which people need certain information before you pass it on?
4. Are you on mailing lists that issue only essential information?

There never seems to be enough time, especially for councillors who work and have family commitments. The way you use time should reflect your priorities.

Key tips for successful time management:

- Keep a diary to note appointments (including setting aside personal time), record deadlines for responses to consultations etc and record which activities you find generally take the most time
- Set up an e-mail address and establish a timeframe for responding to queries
- Develop an effective filing system (a Members' Services Officer may have some tips)
- Frequently archive your filing system

- Obtain a meeting schedule from all your working group and committee secretaries
- Pencil in some time in your diary where you don't take phone calls so that you can get time to go through your papers and check e-mails etc
- Make a note of the contact details of people who have contacted you and require feedback
- Make sure projects are worth embarking on before they begin
- Use spare time, such as when using public transport or waiting for appointments, to catch up on essential reading
- When you obtain documents, check them for a response date.

You may find it helpful to get to as many meetings as possible in your first year to appraise their value and to assess whether any other important contacts attend. It is advisable not to become a member of a board or outside body unless you are fully committed, as this will only compromise your more important priorities such as your party and/or full council meetings.

On your election, if you are an employee, you should discuss with your employer how to manage time off for official council meetings and member training, as well as how to handle any council-related calls to your place of work. Don't forget to consider how your role affects others who are also faced with time pressures, so be realistic with your expectations of officers and fellow councillors.

Think of ways to keep your community informed about council decisions. You could consider setting up your own website, organising open public meetings or issuing newsletters. You may also wish to establish and advertise consistent 'no contact zones' in order to ensure that you have time set aside from your councillor function and for your own personal safety issues. For example, will you meet constituents in your own home or issue your home telephone number? Consideration of all these matters will ensure that the time that you spend on council-related business is effective.





## 6. Central Government Departments

## 6. Central Government Departments

Public services which lie outside the current remit of district councils are administered in Northern Ireland by two main types of authority:

- Government departments
- Nominated or statutory boards or agencies

This chapter will explain the functions of central government departments; information on the main statutory boards and government agencies can be found in Chapter 7. Certain functions of particular interest or relevance to the work of local government are explained in more detail, for instance the section on the Department of the Environment, which has responsibility to ministers for the local government sector. The contact information for the headquarters of each central government department in NI has been provided to allow you to request more information from the relevant source if required.

### Central Government Departments

Economic and social matters are the responsibility of locally elected Northern Ireland ministers when power is devolved to the Northern Ireland Executive. The Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Departments (NI) Order 1999 established 11 Northern Ireland government departments.

These are:

- Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
- Agriculture and Rural Development
- Culture, Arts and Leisure
- Education
- Employment and Learning
- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
- Environment
- Finance and Personnel
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
- Regional Development
- Social Development

When power is not devolved to the Executive, responsibility for the operation of these departments passes back to the Northern Ireland Office which was established in 1972.

At that time the legislative and executive powers vested in the Northern Ireland government and parliament were transferred to the Secretary of State and the United Kingdom Parliament.

The responsibilities and functions of the NIO include:

- Law and order
- Governmental security policy
- Treatment of offenders and criminal justice
- Licensing and legislation concerning firearms, explosives and fireworks
- Information service support to the department and to NI Civil Service departments
- Constitutional development (including implementation of the Belfast Agreement)
- Chief Electoral Office and the Human Rights Commission
- Achieving the Department's political party and socio-economic objectives, focussing on political development and monitoring of the Northern Ireland political scene, and on the management of Anglo-Irish relations

The NIO has a number of agencies including the NI Prison Service, the Compensation Agency for Northern Ireland, Forensic Science Northern Ireland and the Youth Justice Agency, and also funds the Crown Solicitor's Office and the Department of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Contact: Stormont House,  
Belfast, BT4 3ST  
Tel: 028 9052 0700  
Fax: 028 9037 8085  
Email: [press.nio@nics.gov.uk](mailto:press.nio@nics.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.nio.gov.uk](http://www.nio.gov.uk)

The following pages explain the aims and responsibilities of each central government department, and the current Minister(s) heading each department.

## Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM)

OFMDFM is a new concept among the power sharing institutions established under the Good Friday / Belfast Agreement. Essentially it is a joint department where the leaders of the two main government 'blocs' manage the overall agenda and incorporate policy units which cover sensitive central functions. It effectively prevents government policy from developing except by agreement and depends on a degree of goodwill between the main political players in order to operate effectively.

Areas of responsibility in this department include the following:

- Brussels office
- Central Emergency Planning Unit
- Central IT Unit for NI
- Civic Forum Secretariat
- Community Relations Unit
- Economic Policy Unit
- Equality Unit
- Executive Information Services
- Executive Secretariat
- Honours Secretariat
- Human Rights
- Machinery of Government
- North / South Ministerial Council
- NI Bureau in Washington
- Public Appointments
- Public Service Improvement Unit
- Secretariat for Commissioner for Public Appointments
- Service First
- Victims Unit
- E-government Unit

Contact: OFMDFM, Parliament Buildings,  
Stormont, Belfast, BT4 3XX  
Tel: 028 9052 8400  
Fax: 028 9052 1283  
Email: Email function available  
through website  
Website: [www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk](http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk)

## Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD)

DARD aims to promote sustainable economic growth and the development of the countryside in Northern Ireland, by assisting the competitive development of the agricultural, forestry and fishing industries. It provides an advisory service for farmers and a veterinary service with administration of animal health and welfare.

DARD is responsible to the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) in Great Britain in administering schemes affecting the whole of the UK. The department also oversees the application of European Union agricultural policy in Northern Ireland, and is responsible for the Forest Service Agency and Rivers Agency.

The aims of this department include:

- To improve the economic performance of the agri-food, fishing and forestry sectors
- To protect the public, animals and property
- To conserve and enhance the rural environment
- To strengthen the economy and social infrastructure of disadvantaged rural areas

The remit of DARD includes responsibility for:

- Rural development in Northern Ireland
- Developing Northern Ireland's agricultural, forestry and fishing industries
- The provision of an advisory service for farmers
- Research and education in the area of agriculture
- Provision of a veterinary service and management of animal health / welfare policies
- Responsibility for the implementation of schemes in NI which affect the entire UK
- The implementation of EU agricultural policy to Northern Ireland

The Department's responsibilities are divided between the following units:

## Food, Farming & Environment Policy Group

- Environmental policy
- Grants & subsidies
- Animal health & welfare
- Food policy
- Policy co-ordination
- Research & education policy
- Farm policy
- Economics & Statistics

## Establishment and Finance Office

- Personnel
- Office estates
- Estate management
- Finance
- Internal audit
- Rural development
- Fisheries
- Media services
- I.T.
- Co-ordination
- Business support
- Staff development

## Chief Agricultural Officer

- Policy support
- People development
- Policy implementation

## Chief Scientific Officer

- Science services
- Tertiary education
- Statutory testing
- Specialist advice
- Research & development

## Chief Veterinary Officer

- Epizootic section
- Meat and meat hygiene
- Formulating National & International Policy
- Enzootics sections
- Policy & staffing

Contact: Dundonald House, Stormont,  
BELFAST, BT4 3SB  
Tel: 028 9052 4140  
Fax: 028 9052 4170  
Email: [dardhelpline@dardni.gov.uk](mailto:dardhelpline@dardni.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.dardni.gov.uk](http://www.dardni.gov.uk)

## Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL)

The role of DCAL involves policy development, administration and service delivery over a wide range of responsibilities including arts and culture, sport and leisure, and public libraries. DCAL also has direct involvement in two cross-border implementation bodies, the North / South Language Body, which incorporates boards for the development of Irish and Ulster Scots, and Waterways Ireland. Through these bodies the Department seeks to maximise the benefit of cross-border co-operation on areas of mutual interest.

DCAL hopes to achieve its aims through the 'promotion of creativity, multiplicity, innovation and learning and by sustainably managing Northern Ireland's cultural resources to promote a vision of a positive, imaginative, informed and dynamic society'.

The remit of DCAL includes responsibility for:

- Arts and Culture
- Sport and Leisure
- Libraries
- Museums
- Armagh Planetarium
- Visitors Amenities
- Inland Waterways
- Inland Fisheries
- Ordnance Survey
- Public Record Office
- Language Policy
- Lottery Matters
- Millennium Events & Events Companies
- Ulster Historical Foundation

The Department's responsibilities are divided between the following units:

## Policy, Research, and Cultural / Linguistic Diversity

- Language diversity
- Cultural diversity
- Policy evaluation & research

## Arts, Inland Waterways / Fisheries, Libraries, Museums and Sport

- Lottery, Arts, & Sport
- Museums, Libraries & Odyssey
- Fisheries & Inland Waterways



## Corporate Services and Agencies

- Finance
- Corporate Services
- NI Events Company
- Personnel & Facilities

DCAL also oversees the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) and Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland (OSNI), both executive agencies established to provide information and other resources to the public.

Contact: Interpoint, 20-40 York Street,  
BELFAST, BT15 1AQ  
Tel: 028 9025 8825  
Fax: 028 9025 8906  
Email: dcal@dcalni.gov.uk  
Website: www.dcalni.gov.uk

## Department of Education (DENI)

The Department of Education has responsibility for aspects of education relating to schools and the Youth Service, including policy, legislation and resource issues. DENI has responsibility for strategic planning and accounting for public expenditure as it manages the funding and administration of different types of schools. It monitors the overall planning, provision and effectiveness of schools. The Department also has an education and training inspectorate and makes appointments to the five Education and Library Boards. It does not have responsibility for libraries, which fall under DCAL's remit.

The Department develops policy regarding the school curriculum and the assessment of pupils, including examinations. It oversees transfer procedures and school enrolment, and provides special education services and pupil support. DENI also has responsibility for community relations among young people as part of its overall youth services remit, provides a comprehensive youth service and supports many associated organisations.

Colleges and Institutes of Further and Higher Education (including the universities and what were formerly known as technical colleges) are the responsibility of the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL).

DENI aims 'to provide the highest possible standards for the education and development of all our young people with equal access for all, motivating them to achieve their potential'.

## DENI is responsible for:

- Special education
- Schools funding & administration
- School effectiveness
- School planning & provision
- Schools inspectorate
- Pre-school education
- Youth service
- Teachers (numbers, remuneration etc)
- Education & Library Board appointments

Over the next six years, the Department and its public bodies have pledged to pursue a number of strategic aims:

- Promotion of excellence
- Provision of choice
- Ensuring equity and the enhancement of accessibility
- Providing education and personal development for life
- Doing things better.

The Department's responsibilities are divided between the following units:

## Children and Young People Division

- Pupil Support Unit
- Special Education
- Curriculum & Assessment
- Qualifications & business / education links Branch

## School Funding and Administration Division

- School funding Branch
- School administration Branch
- Open enrolment & transfer procedure Branch

## Development and Infrastructure Division

- PFI unit
- Building branch
- Development branch
- Need & effectiveness project team

## Teachers, School, Policy and Improvement Division

- School improvement
- School policy & planning
- Teachers' education & negotiating committee
- Teachers' pay & administration, & Teachers' pensions Branches

## Equality, Rights and Social Inclusion Division

- Youth Service Branch
- Community Relations
- Statistics & Research Branch
- Equality, rights & social inclusion Unit

## Finance Division

- Accounts Branch
- Internal Audit Unit
- Area Board Resource Allocation & Monitoring Branch (ABRAM)
- Financial Planning Branch
- Economic Advisory Unit

## Corporate Services Division

- Information Services
- Establishment Branch
- Business Development Branch
- Machinery of Government Branch

## Education and Training Inspectorate

- Policy, planning and improvement
- Youth and Community and Education other than at School; Culture, Arts and Leisure
- Post-16 Education including Schools, Further Education, Training, Higher Education and Teaching Education
- Post-16 Education including Schools, Further Education, Training, Higher Education and Teaching Education

Contact: Rathgael House, Balloo Road,  
Bangor, BT19 7PR  
Tel: 028 9127 9279  
Fax: 028 9127 9100  
Email: [mail@deni.gov.uk](mailto:mail@deni.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk)

## Department for Employment and Learning (DEL)

DEL is responsible for developing policy, planning, funding and administering further and higher education with advice from the NI Higher Education Council and the Further Education Consultative Committee. It is also responsible for policy in respect of student loans and awards (mandatory, discretionary and postgraduate) and for the payment of postgraduate awards.

DEL's key objective is to develop a culture of lifelong learning and to promote wider access to, and greater participation in, further and higher education, particularly from groups previously underrepresented. It aims to improve quality and performance in the higher and further education sectors, and to enhance the contributions of these sectors to the regional economy. DEL's mission is "to equip people for work in a modern economy."

The Department has assumed most of the responsibilities of the former Training and Employment Agency. In this respect DEL's aim is to assist economic development and help people find sustainable employment through training and employment services. DEL also deals with the processing of employment and industrial relations legislation, and has responsibility for matters relating to the Labour Relations Agency and the Certification Officer for Northern Ireland.

The department plans to address four major issues in the coming years:

- Employability
- University research
- Learner support
- e-Business

The Department's responsibilities are divided between the following units:

## Training and Employment

- Regional Operations
- Skills & Industry
- Employment Rights & New Deal

## Employment Rights Division

- New Deal Branch
- Employment Rights 1

- Employment Rights 2
- Employment Programmes
- Disablement Advice Services
- Employment Assessment
- Unit

## **Regional Operations Division**

- Eastern Region
- Western Region
- Regional Operations Support
- Partnership Team
- Employment, Guidance & Regulatory Support

## **Skills and Industry Division**

- Supplier Services
- Lifelong learning
- Training Programmes / IFI
- Training Services
- Sectoral development
- Management development

## **Higher and Further Education**

### **Corporate Services**

- Corporate Services
- Finance & European Division
- Higher Education & Student Support Division
- Further Education & Learning Policy

## **Finance and European Division**

- Finance 1
- Finance 2
- European Unit 1
- European Unit 2

## **Higher Education and Student Support Division**

- NIHEC
- Student Support
- Tertiary education statistics / research 1
- Higher Education
- Tertiary education statistics / research 2

## **Further Education & Learning Policy Division**

- Finance
- Further Education Policy & Strategic Development

## **Corporate Services Division**

- CIS
- Personnel

- Research and Evaluation
- Press Office
- Central Management

Contact: Adelaide House, Adelaide Street,  
Belfast, BT2 8GB

Tel: 028 9025 7921

Fax: 028 9025 7919

Email: [info@delni.gov.uk](mailto:info@delni.gov.uk)

Website: [www.delni.gov.uk](http://www.delni.gov.uk)

## **Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI)**

DETI provides a wide range of services to help develop the Northern Ireland economy.

The Department has four agencies, established as non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs), to assist in strategy implementation:

- Invest Northern Ireland (Invest NI): supports business growth and inward investment, promotes innovation, research and development and in-company training, encourages exports and supports local economic development and company start-up;
- Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB): responsible for the development, promotion and marketing of Northern Ireland as a tourist destination;
- Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI): responsible for health, safety and welfare at work;
- General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland (GCCNI): responsible for promoting and safeguarding the interests of consumers and campaigning for the best possible standards of service and protection

There is a Departmental Board whose purpose is to manage business at a strategic level and to make decisions in relation to economic development policies and strategies and the allocation of resources to DETI agencies. It also considers reports from each of the agencies in relation to their expenditure and performance.

The Department's responsibilities are divided between the following units:

## **Policy Group**

- Statistics
- Information Age Initiative
- Strategic Planning Division

## **Policy Evaluation & Organisation Change Division**

- Tourism
- Restructuring
- Human Rights & Regulatory Impact

## **Energy Division**

- Natural gas
- Petroleum
- Electricity

## **Management Services Group Business and Consumer Regulation Division**

- Private office
- Solvency Services
- Companies registration
- Trading standards
- Press office

Contact: Netherleigh Massey Avenue,  
BELFAST, BT4 2JP  
Tel: 028 9052 9900  
Fax: 028 9025 7778  
Email: [information@detini.gov.uk](mailto:information@detini.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.detini.gov.uk](http://www.detini.gov.uk)

## **Department of the Environment (DOE)**

The Department of the Environment's main functions include: planning control; environment and heritage; waste management; pollution control; wildlife and countryside protection; sustainable development; driver and vehicle licensing and testing; road safety; and transport licensing and enforcement. It also has general oversight of local government.

The Department's aim is to improve the quality of life for people in Northern Ireland through:

- the promotion of sustainable development principles in all activities of government and wider society;

- in particular their application in DOE's responsibilities for land use, air and water quality, waste management and the natural and built environments;
- the reduction of road traffic casualties; and
- the promotion of efficient and effective local government.

The Department's responsibilities are divided between the following units:

## **Corporate Services, Planning and Local Government**

- Local Government Audit
- Local Government Policy
- Planning Service

## **Road Safety, DVTa, DVLNI, Environment and Heritage**

- Road Safety
- Environment Policy
- Natural & Built Environment
- Environmental issues
- Environment & Heritage Service
- Integrated pollution prevention & control
- Air quality
- Water quality
- Driver & vehicle licensing
- Driver & vehicle testing
- Climate change, trans-boundary air pollution & radioactivity

## **Local Government Division**

DOE is the central department responsible for local government issues. Local Government Division provides the legislative and policy framework for the administration, finance and audit of district councils in a general supervisory role. It maintains and develops constructive formal and informal working relations with organisations representative of local government, in order to assist district councils to carry out their functions efficiently and effectively in interests of the ratepayers.

The Division produces and updates local government primary and subordinate legislation, including the local government pension scheme regulations. It contributes towards the continuous development of Best Value procedures and the development



of emergency planning arrangements in partnership with councils and other interested bodies.

The Division's financial role includes the distribution of general grant to district councils under statutory formulae; the review of councillors' allowances, including travelling and subsistence expenses; approval of loan sanctions; the issue of accounts directions; and the review of compliance with accounting codes of practice.

Local Government Division oversees the work of two executive non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs), namely the Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee and monitors their compliance with central government requirements. The Division is responsible for the appointment of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner and also for the designation of local government auditors.

The Division is structured into two sections, one with responsibility for Policy and Legislation and the other for Administration and Finance.

Contact: Local Government Division,  
Clarence Court, 10-18  
Adelaide Street, Belfast, BT2 8GB  
Tel: 028 9054 0710  
Fax: 028 9054 0025  
Email: [cmb@doe.gov.uk](mailto:cmb@doe.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.doeni.gov.uk/lgd/](http://www.doeni.gov.uk/lgd/)

## Road Safety Division

The DOE is responsible for the development of road safety policy and the co-ordination of a strategic approach to tackling road safety issues in Northern Ireland. DOE works closely with other departments and agencies with an interest in road safety, particularly DRD and the Police Service of Northern Ireland. DOE monitors and assesses developments in road safety elsewhere, particularly in Great Britain, the Republic of Ireland and Europe and liaises closely with the Department for Transport in London and the Department of Transport in Dublin. DOE also participates in EU and UK-wide policy reviews and initiatives.

The Department's aim in fulfilling its road safety responsibility is 'to reduce road casualties and ensure proper regulation of drivers, vehicles and transport operators'. This involves:

- Monitoring and progressing the Road Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2012, providing a focus for governmental and community efforts to reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries on the roads
- Regulating drivers, vehicles and transport operators using roads in Northern Ireland through testing, licensing and enforcement via the Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency (DVTA) and Driver and Vehicle Licensing Northern Ireland (DVLI)
- Encouraging positive road user attitudes and behaviour through road safety publicity programmes to improve the attitudes and behaviour of road users in order to contribute to a reduction in deaths and serious injuries on Northern Ireland's roads
- Facilitating the provision of road safety education and training to schools and target groups of road users. The education and training of children and young people in road safety is vital in establishing responsible attitudes and behaviour in road users from an early age
- Supporting the activities of road safety volunteers. Under article 52 (2) of the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 the Department provides financial and other assistance to the Road Safety Council of Northern Ireland and, through the Council, to local road safety committees. The Road Safety Council is a voluntary organisation comprising representatives from road safety committees and individuals and organisations with expertise or a special interest in road safety. The Council's role is to enhance the work of the Department by organising road safety activities and encouraging community participation in local events.

The development of the Department's policy and legislation in relation to Road Safety and the regulation of Drivers, Vehicles and Operators is the responsibility of the Road Safety and Vehicle Standards Division.

**Contact:** Road Safety and Vehicle Standards Division,  
Room G34, Clarence Court,  
10-18 Adelaide Street,  
BELFAST, BT2 8GB  
**Tel:** 028 9054 0843  
**Fax:** 028 9054 0775  
**Email:** roads@drdni.gov.uk  
**Website:** www.doeni.gov.uk/roadsafety

**Contact:** Vehicle Standards and Agencies Policy Branch, Room G17,  
Clarence Court,  
10-18 Adelaide Street,  
BELFAST, BT2 8GB  
**Tel:** 028 9054 0141  
**Fax:** 028 9054 0020  
**Email:** jacqui.dickey@dceni.gov.uk  
**Website:** www.doeni.gov.uk

**Contact:** Road Safety Branch HQ,  
Room G43, Clarence Court,  
10-18 Adelaide Street,  
BELFAST, BT2 8GB  
**Tel:** 028 9054 0809  
**Fax:** 028 9054 0681  
**Email:** roadsafety.clarencecourt@doeni.gov.uk  
**Website:** www.doeni.gov.uk/roadsafety

## Environmental Policy Group

Environmental Policy Group (EPG) is responsible for the formulation of policy and the preparation of legislation to reduce, and where possible prevent, pollution and to protect Northern Ireland's natural and built heritage. EPG contributes to the development of national and EU policy on sustainable development, biodiversity and climate change as well as specific environmental policy areas such as air pollution, water quality management, waste management and nature conservation.

EPG is headed at Deputy Secretary level and comprises two separate divisions:

- Environmental Protection Division, dealing with a broad range of waste issues, air quality and a number of other environmental issues including dangerous wild animals and environmental information; and
- Sustainable Development Division, dealing with sustainable development, water, natural and built heritage, and climate change and global atmosphere

Both divisions are responsible for a substantial legislative programme including transposing EU environmental directives into domestic legislation. EPG also provides the policy and legislative framework within which the Environment and Heritage Service operates and monitors EHS performance.

**Contact:** Environmental Policy Division,  
20-24 Donegall Street,  
Belfast, BT1 2GP  
**Tel:** 028 9054 4591  
**Fax:** 028 9054 4520  
**Email:** epd@doeni.gov.uk  
**Website:** www.doeni.gov.uk/epd

**Contact:** Sustainable Development Division,  
River House, 48 High Street,  
Belfast BT1 2AW  
**Tel:** 028 9025 7360  
**Fax:** 028 9025 7390  
**Email:** epd@doeni.gov.uk  
**Website:** www.doeni.gov.uk/epd

## Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP)

DFP has a wide range of functions, many of which are carried out centrally on behalf of the NI Civil Service as a whole. DFP is responsible for public expenditure, including the formulation of an annual budget. It seeks to secure appropriate funding from various sources, including the European Union. It is also responsible for personnel, which translates as the general management of the Civil Service, including the areas of policy, pay, recruitment and security. The Department is also responsible for law reform and the provision of legal services to other Northern Ireland departments.

The Department provides high quality business support and procurement services for relevant departments, including guidance on achieving best value. It provides a valuation service to the public sector and through the Rates Collection Agency (RCA) collects the rates in Northern Ireland.

The Department of Finance and Personnel has six main divisions:

- Central Finance
- Central Personnel Group
- Corporate Service

- European Division
- Departmental Solicitors Office
- Office of Law Reform

DFP also supervises a number of agencies:

- Valuation & Lands Agency
- Central Procurement Director
- Rates Collection Agency (RCA)
- Lands Registers of NI
- Business Development Services
- NI Statistics & Research Agency

The aims of these Directorates and Agencies, are to:

- Provide business support
- Develop policies for the management of the NI Civil Service
- Secure an adequate share of public expenditure resources
- Provide policy oversight and internal management
- Ensure efficiency in the activities of NI public bodies
- Provide high quality cost effective legal advice for NI departments
- Support the conveyancing and property markets in NI
- Provide research services to NI departments to aid policy development
- To be first choice for professional advice on property and the principal provider of valuation services to the public sector in Northern Ireland
- To review and ensure intelligible development of areas of civil law
- To levy and collect rates on behalf of central government.

Responsibilities of the department include:

- Finance and personnel
- IT and common services
- Accommodation
- Legal services
- Land Registry of NI
- Rates Collection Agency
- Valuation and Lands Agency
- Office of Law Reform
- Business Development Service
- Government Purchasing Agency
- NI Construction Industry Advisory Council

- NI Building Regulations Advisory Council
- NI Statistics & Research Agency
- Construction Service (building regulation)

Contact: Rathgael House, Balloo Road,  
Bangor, BT19 7NA

Tel: 028 9185 8111

Fax: 028 9185 8282

Email: [dfp.enquiries@dfpni.gov.uk](mailto:dfp.enquiries@dfpni.gov.uk)

Website: [www.dfpni.gov.uk](http://www.dfpni.gov.uk)

## Construction Service

The Department is responsible for the making and amending of building regulations that exist to ensure the health, safety, welfare and convenience of people, and to further the conservation of fuel and power. District councils are responsible for administering and enforcing the regulations through the Building Control Service.

## Rate Collection Agency

The RCA is an executive agency within DFP. The Agency's principal function is to collect rates due on behalf of Northern Ireland's 26 councils, in respect of District Rates, and on behalf of DFP in respect of the Regional Rate. It also administers the Housing Benefit Scheme for owner-occupiers.

The Offices of the Agency are as follows:

Area	Councils	Contact
Belfast & Eastern	Ards, Belfast, Carrickfergus, Castlereagh, Down, Lisburn, Newtownabbey, North Down	Londonderry House, 21-27 Chichester Street, Belfast, BT1 4JJ Tel: 028 9025 2757 Fax: 028 9025 2724
North Eastern	Antrim, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Larne, Magherafelt, Moyle	Academy House, 121a Broughshane Street Ballymena, BT43 6HY Tel: 028 2566 4700 Fax: 028 2566 4715
North Western	Coleraine, Derry, Limavady, Strabane	Orchard House, 40 Foyle Street, Londonderry, BT48 6AT Tel: 028 7131 9900 Fax: 028 7131 9841
Southern	Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon, Newry	16 West Street, Portadown, BT62 3PN Tel: 028 3839 6200 Fax: 028 3839 6222
South Western	Cookstown, Dungannon, Fermanagh, Omagh	Boaz House, 15 Scarffe's Entry, Omagh, BT79 1JE Tel: 028 8225 4777 Fax: 028 8225 4722

Contact: Headquarters, Oxford House,  
49-55 Chichester Street, Belfast, BT1 4HH  
Tel: 028 9025 2252  
Fax: 028 9025 2113  
Email: [customerservices.rca@dfpni.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices.rca@dfpni.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.ratecollectionagency.gov.uk](http://www.ratecollectionagency.gov.uk)



## Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS)

The Department is responsible for Health; Social Services; Public Health and Safety; Health Promotion; the Fire Authority; Food Safety; and Emergency Planning.

The Department's responsibilities are divided between the following units:

- Planning and Resources Group
- Personnel and Corporate Services
- Professional Technology & Information Systems
- Finance
- Public Safety, Strategic Planning and Information and Analysis Unit
- Health and Personal Social Services Management Group
- Health Estates Agency
- Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Agency
- Northern Ireland Child Support Agency
- Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency
- Northern Ireland Health Promotion Agency

Contact: Castle Buildings,  
Stormont, BELFAST, BT4 3SG  
Tel: 028 9052 0500  
Fax: 028 9052 0572  
Email: [webmaster@dhsspsni.gov.uk](mailto:webmaster@dhsspsni.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.dhsspsni.gov.uk](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk)

### Central Services Agency

This statutory body is responsible for the provision of a range of common and support services to the health and social services. These include payments to General Practitioners (both doctors and dentists), legal services, a regional supplies service and a range of financial and other support services, such as the issue of medical cards. The agency also provides support for the Health and Social Services Boards in the discharge of their contracts with general medical and general dental practitioners, community pharmacists and optometrists.

The Agency is run by a board, comprising a Chairperson and four non-executive members appointed by the Minister, and three executive members who are employees of the Agency.

A number of statutory bodies have been established. These include the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland (HPANI), the Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service Agency (NIBTSA), the Northern Ireland Regional Medical Physics Agency (NIRMPA) and the Guardian Ad Litem Agency (NIGALA).

In addition there are two other central bodies. The National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting for Northern Ireland is one of four such Boards in the United Kingdom. It is responsible for the registration, control and training of the professions concerned. The Northern Ireland Council for Post-Graduate Medical and Dental Education is responsible for the fundholding, oversight and development of post-graduate medical and dental education.

## Department for Regional Development (DRD)

The Department for Regional Development's main functions include: transport planning; public transport; roads; rail; ports and airports; city visioning; water; and strategic planning. The aim of DRD is to "improve quality of life by maintaining and enhancing a range of essential infrastructure services and by shaping the region's long-term strategic development".

Much of DRD's operational work is carried out by its two executive agencies: Roads Service and Water Service.

Responsibilities of DRD include:

- Transport Planning
- Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company
- Public Transport
- Ports and Airports
- Roads Service
- Rail
- Strategic Planning
- Energy (Strategic and Developmental)
- Water

The Department's responsibilities are divided between the following units:

## **Roads Management Services, Personnel and Water**

- Personnel
- Water Policy
- Central Policy Unit

## **Roads Services**

- Engineering
- Finance
- Corporate Services
- Regional offices
- Network & customer services

## **Water Service**

- Operations
- Finance
- Corporate services
- Regional offices
- Development
- Technical matters

Contact: Clarence Court,  
10-18 Adelaide Street,  
Belfast, BT2 8GB

Tel: 028 9054 0540

Fax: 028 9054 0642

Email: [enquiries@drd.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@drd.gov.uk)

Website: [www.drdni.gov.uk](http://www.drdni.gov.uk)

## **Transport**

Transport (Policy and Support) Division is responsible for directing and overseeing the provision of public transport services by the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company and its subsidiary bus and rail companies. The Division progresses rural transport and accessible transport policies to promote social inclusion and administers the management of the NIEU Transportation Sub-Programme. The Division also contributes to the development of an integrated and sustainable transport system in Northern Ireland.

## **Department for Social Development (DSD)**

The Department for Social Development has strategic responsibility for urban regeneration, community and voluntary sector development, social legislation, housing, social security

benefits, pensions and child support.

DSD had oversight of a number of public bodies including the Housing Executive and Laganside Corporation.

DSD's mission is to promote individual and community wellbeing through integrated social and economic action. Many of its policies impact on health, particularly housing. It interacts with many of the poorest in society, and has responsibility for improving housing, delivering social security benefits, providing child support services and developing community infrastructure.

The responsibilities of the DSD include:

- Voluntary Activity Unit
- Housing Policy
- NI Housing Executive
- Urban Renewal
- Community Sector
- Laganside Corporation
- Rent Assessment Panel
- Housing Benefit Review Boards
- Social Security Agency
- Child Support Agency
- Lands Division
- Independent Tribunal Service
- Central Adjudication Services
- Office of Social Fund Commissioner
- Social Legislation

The Department's responsibilities are divided between the following units:

## **Urban Regeneration and Community Development Division**

- Central Business Unit
- Voluntary Activity Unit
- Londonderry Development
- Belfast Regeneration
- Regional Development

## **Resources, Housing and Social Security Group**

- Statistics
- Corporate Services
- Establishment Office
- Finance
- Housing
- Housing Finance
- Information Office
- Economics

- Personnel
- Housing Management
- Housing Association Branch
- Housing Policy (NIHE & Energy)
- ADSO / Emergency Planning
- Equality & Corporate Planning Unit
- Office of the Permanent Secretary
- Decision-making and appeals service
- Social security policy & legislation
- Housing Policy (Housing Association, Co-ownership, Private rented sectors)

## **Social Security Agency**

- Finance & Support Unit
- Benefit Security
- Personnel & Planning
- Business Development

## **Child Support Agency**

- Operations Division
- Business Development
- NI Operations, Centre & Field
- Resources Division
- Eastern Business Unit
- Maintenance Assessment & Fraud
- Debt & accounts

Contact: Lighthouse Building,  
1 Cromac Place,  
Gasworks Business Park,  
Ormeau Road, Belfast, BT7 2JB

Tel: 028 9082 9000  
Fax: 028 9056 9240  
Email: [press.office@dsdni.gov.uk](mailto:press.office@dsdni.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.dsdni.gov.uk](http://www.dsdni.gov.uk)

## **Housing**

The Department for Social Development provides the policy, legislative and financial framework within which the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Registered Housing Associations operate. It also has overall responsibility for informing and directing social housing policy in Northern Ireland and works closely with the Housing Executive and the Housing Association movement in implementing those policies.

Responsibility for the implementation of that policy, and day-to-day matters of social housing management, rests with the Housing Executive and Registered Housing Associations. 41 housing associations,

including the Northern Ireland Co-ownership Housing Association, are currently registered with the Department.

Housing Associations are voluntary non-profit making organisations which provide housing accommodation for persons in need. From 1998, housing associations have been building all new social housing, under the strategic direction of the Housing Executive. The Executive retains new-build powers to provide where others find themselves unable to undertake particular schemes.

## **Northern Ireland Housing Council**

District council interests in housing are represented by the Northern Ireland Housing Council. Each district council nominates one member to the Housing Council. The Housing Council in turn nominates to the head of the DSD three of its members for appointment to the 10-member Board of the Housing Executive. The Minister appoints the remainder of the members from the general public. The Housing Council meets monthly apart from July and December and if a member cannot attend, the district council can send an observer and although permitted take part in any discussion he or she may not vote.

The Housing Council's job is to advise the Housing Executive on any matter affecting housing referred to it either by the Executive itself or by any person with a bona-fide interest in housing. The Council may make recommendations to the Board of the Executive and if the Council feels that the Board has unreasonably rejected or failed to give adequate consideration to any recommendation, it may take the matter up with the Department. In turn the Housing Executive must consult the Housing Council at least once a year about its draft programme for housing accommodation.

Area	Area Office Contact
Belfast	32/36 Great Victoria Street, Belfast, BT2 7BA Telephone: 028 9031 7000
North-East	Twickenham House, Mount Street, Ballymena, BT43 6BT Telephone: 028 2565 3399
South-East	Strangford House, 28 Court Street, Newtownards, BT23 3NX Telephone: 028 9182 0600
South	Marlborough House, Central Way, Craigavon, BT64 1AJ Telephone: 028 3834 1188
West	Richmond Chambers, The Diamond Londonderry, BT48 6PE Telephone: 028 7137 2000

## Social Security Agency

The Northern Ireland Social Security Agency is the largest executive agency in Northern Ireland and employs over 5,800 staff. The Agency is managed by a six-member Board, consisting of the Chief Executive and five Directors. It also recently appointed a non-executive director. Its main business is to manage the delivery of social security benefits; to provide various related services, such as advice and information; to process requests for reviews of decisions and appeals; and to detect and prevent benefit fraud. The Agency delivers its services through a network of 35 social security offices spread throughout Northern Ireland and through central offices mostly based in Castle Court, Belfast.

The Agency also provides, through its Belfast Benefit Centre, 'back office' benefits processing services for the Benefits Agency in Great Britain and, through the Paid Order Unit at Lisahally, a storage, search and retrieval service for paid benefit orders for the whole of the UK. The Agency's overall aim is to improve the economic and social conditions of those people and areas in greatest need, by providing a fair system of financial help for people who need it most, encouraging personal responsibility and improving incentives to work and save.

Contact: 5th Floor, Lighthouse Building,  
Gasworks Business Park,  
1 Cromac Place, Belfast, BT7 2JB  
Tel: 028 9056 9100  
Fax: 028 9056 9180  
Website: [www.ssani.gov.uk](http://www.ssani.gov.uk)

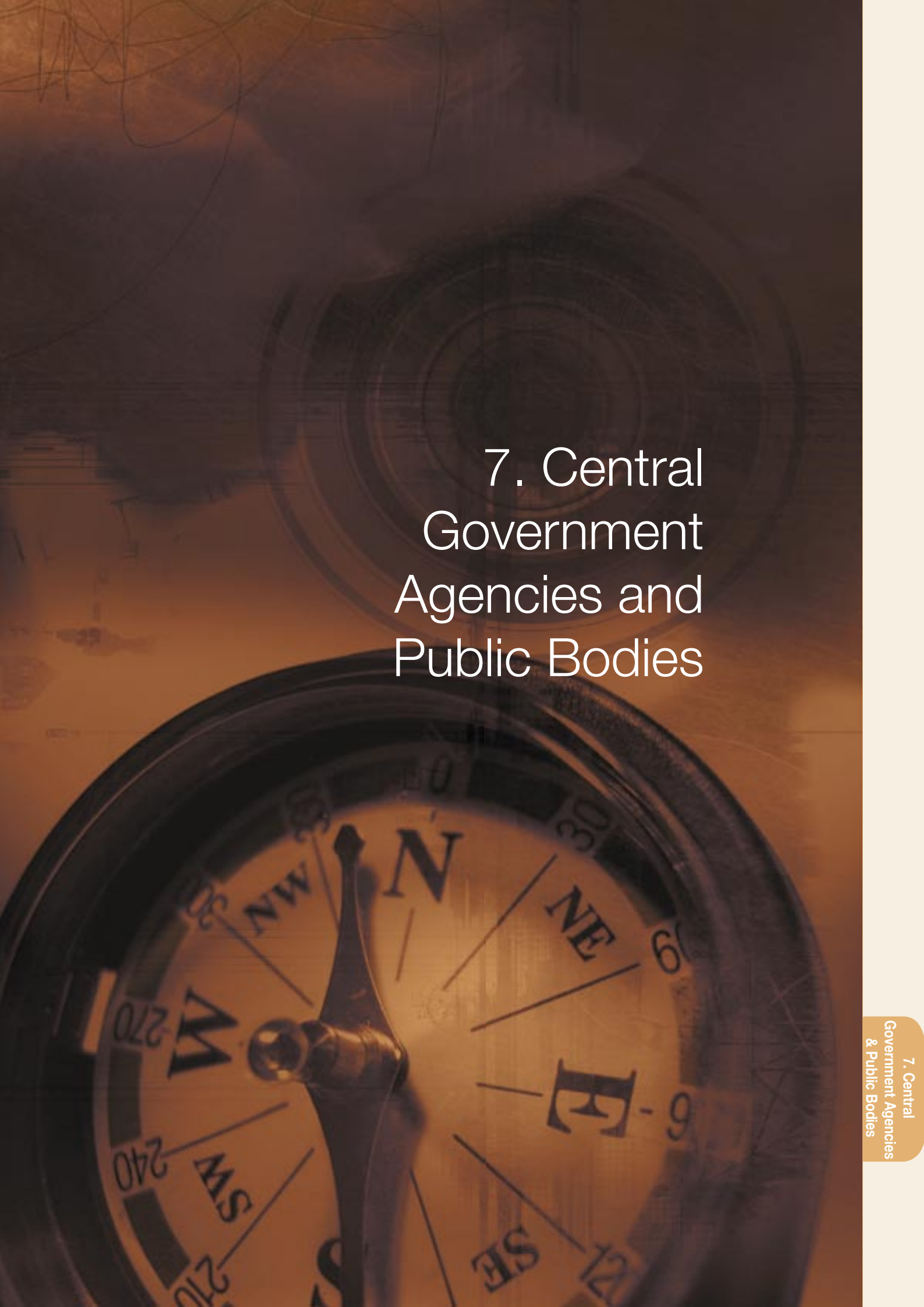
## Complaints Only

Tel: 028 9082 9471/ 028 9082 9483  
Fax: 028 9082 9538  
E-mail: [customerservice.unit@dndi.gov.uk](mailto:customerservice.unit@dndi.gov.uk)

## Benefit Enquiry Line

0800 220 674





## 7. Central Government Agencies and Public Bodies

## 7. Central Government Agencies and Public Bodies

As outlined in Chapter 6, there are 11 Northern Ireland government departments:

- Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
- Agriculture and Rural Development
- Culture, Arts and Leisure
- Education
- Employment and Learning
- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
- Environment
- Finance and Personnel
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
- Regional Development
- Social Development

On behalf of these departments and the Northern Ireland Office, much work is carried out by agencies. Some of the main agencies and their controlling departments are listed below. This list has been taken from the register of bodies due to fall under the scope of the Review of Public Administration. A more detailed explanation (where information was available) of the role of those agencies undertaking work of particular relevance to local government follows where the organisation has been highlighted in **bold** and is marked with an asterisk, for example the \*Planning Appeals Commission.

### Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM)

Northern Ireland Economic Council  
 Northern Ireland Economic Research Centre  
**\*Planning Appeals Commission**  
 Statute Law Committee  
**\*Water Appeals Commission**

### Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD)

Agricultural Research Institute of Northern Ireland  
 Agricultural Wages Board  
 DARD College Advisory Boards  
**\*Drainage Council for Northern Ireland**

Independent Appeals for Farm Subsidies  
 Livestock & Meat Commission for Northern Ireland  
 Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority  
 Pig Production Development Committee  
 Rivers Agency  
 The Forest Service  
 The Rural Development Council

### Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL)

Museums and Galleries of Northern Ireland  
 Northern Ireland Museums Council  
 Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland  
**\*Public Record Office of Northern Ireland**  
**\*The Arts Council of Northern Ireland**  
**\*The Fisheries Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland**  
 The Northern Ireland Events Company  
**\*The Sports Council for Northern Ireland**

### Department of Education (DENI)

Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta  
 Council for Catholic Maintained Schools  
**\*Education and Library Boards (Belfast, N East, S East, Southern, Western)**  
 Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education  
 Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment  
 Staff Commission for Education and Library Board  
 The General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland  
 Youth Council for Northern Ireland

### Department for Employment and Learning (DEL)

Construction Industry Training Board  
 Enterprise Ulster  
 Fair Employment Tribunal  
**\*Labour Relations Agency**  
 Learning and Skills Advisory Board  
 Northern Ireland Higher Education Council  
 Northern Ireland Industrial Court  
 Ulster Supported Employment Limited

## Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI)

General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland

**\*Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland**

**\*Invest Northern Ireland**

**\*The Northern Ireland Tourist Board**

## Department of the Environment (DOE)

Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside

**\*Driver and Vehicle Licensing Northern Ireland**

**\*Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency**

**\*Environment and Heritage Service**

Historic Buildings Council

Historic Monuments Council

**\*Local Government Staff Commission**

Northern Ireland Local Government Officers Superannuation Committee

**\*Planning Service**

The Northern Ireland Review Body (Driver, Operator and Vehicle Licensing)

Waste Management Advisory Board

## Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP)

Law Reform Advisory Committee

Lay Observer

Northern Ireland Building Regulations Advisory Committee

Statistics Advisory Committee

## Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS)

Central Advisory Committees

Distinction and Meritorious Service Awards Committee

**\*Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service**

**\*Health and Social Services Boards (Eastern, Northern, Southern, Western)**

**\*Health and Social Services Councils**

**\*Health and Social Services Trusts**

Mental Health Commission for Northern Ireland  
Mental Health Review Tribunal for Northern Ireland

**\*Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Services Agency**

Northern Ireland Central Services Agency

Northern Ireland Council for Postgraduate Medical and Dental Education

**\*Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency**

**\*Northern Ireland Health Promotion Agency**

Northern Ireland Practice and Education

Council for Nursing and Midwifery

**\*Northern Ireland Regional Medical Physics Agency**

Poisons Board

Registered Homes Tribunals

Speciality Advisory Committees

Tribunal Under Schedule II, Health & Personal

Social Services (NI) Order '72

## Department for Regional Development (DRD)

Ministerial Advisory Boards (for Roads and Water Services)

Northern Ireland Holding Company

Northern Ireland Water Council

**\*Roads Service**

Trust Ports

**\*Water Service**

## Department for Social Development (DSD)

Charities Advisory Committee

Disability Living Allowance Advisory Board for Northern Ireland

Housing Benefit Review Board

Laganside Corporation

**\*Northern Ireland Housing Executive**

Office of the President of Appeals Tribunals

Registered Housing Associations (40)

Rent Assessment Panel

## Central Government Agencies

### The Planning Appeals Commission

The Planning Appeals Commission is not part of the DoE, but an independent appellate body established to determine appeals and to hold inquiries and hearings. It consists of a Chief Commissioner and currently has a complement of 12 full-time and two-part time members. Commission members are appointed by the Secretary of State and are mostly chartered planners; however some have expertise in related disciplines such as law, architecture and surveying.

The Commission's functions are specified in the 1991 Planning Order:

- the hearing and determination of appeals against decisions on planning applications, enforcement notices, Certificates of Alternative Development Value and allied matters relating to the preservation of listed buildings and trees, the control of advertisements
- the holding of inquiries and hearings on objections or representations relating to development plans, development schemes, major planning applications, proposed vesting orders, the proposed revocation of permissions or consents, and other matters

In the first function, the Commission has to make a decision on the specified matters and in the second, it has to hold an inquiry or a hearing, and to make a report on the specified matters. In each case the inquiry is conducted by a member appointed by the Chief Commissioner and the determination or report is made by the Commission. The Commission is principally engaged with hearing and reporting on major planning applications and objections to development plans, and the determination of planning appeals.

Contact: Park House,  
87-91 Great Victoria Street,  
Belfast, BT2 7AG  
Tel: 028 9024 4710  
Fax: 028 9031 2536  
Email: [info@pacni.gov.uk](mailto:info@pacni.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.pacni.gov.uk](http://www.pacni.gov.uk)

## The Drainage Council for Northern Ireland

The Drainage Council for Northern Ireland is an Independent Statutory Body consisting of 18 members, 10 of whom represent district councils and the remainder represent other interests such as drainage, agriculture, industry, fishery, tourism, and environmental interests.

The Council gives independent advice to the Rivers Agency, an Executive Agency within DARD, in relation to flood defences, drainage schemes or variations to schemes. It is the Drainage Council's responsibility to decide which watercourses and sea defences

should be designated for maintenance at public expense. The Council also acts in a consultative capacity on the environmental assessment of proposed drainage works.

Contact: The Secretary,  
c/o Rivers Agency,  
4 Hospital Road,  
Hydebank, Belfast, BT8 8JP  
Tel: 028 9025 3357  
Fax: 028 9025 3455  
Website: [www.riversagency.cni.gov.uk/about/drainagecouncil.htm](http://www.riversagency.cni.gov.uk/about/drainagecouncil.htm)

## The Arts Council of Northern Ireland

The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is the principal channel for government funding through its revenue and Lottery funds. The main objectives of the Arts Council are "to increase opportunities for creative participation in the arts; develop new audiences for the arts and build on existing ones; extend opportunities for artists to develop their work and practice; and to strengthen the capacity of arts organisations to deliver quality experiences of the arts".

DCAL funds the Arts Council via grant-in-aid, and appoints a Board of 15 members to manage the Council's affairs. Approximately 45 employees, including specialists in art, drama, music, literature, traditional arts, arts and disability, and community arts service the Arts Council.

The Council seeks to fulfil its objectives by undertaking the following:

- providing information and services to the arts community and Government departments;
- encouraging support for the arts from district councils, the education sector, economic development agencies, private sponsors and charitable trusts;
- commissioning and disseminating research which provides evidence for policy creation and advocacy;
- communicating the benefits that the arts bring to wider society;
- providing financial support for appropriately constituted artistic organisations such as the orchestra, theatre companies, performing societies and arts committees;



- working with other partners, such as the British Council, to promote abroad the work of artists from Northern Ireland;
- supporting district councils and other agencies in improving access and facilities for the performance and practice of the arts;
- providing awards, bursaries, fellowships, travel and research grants each year to enable artists to engage in a wide range of projects and to further their careers internationally;
- maintaining close working relations through Standing Committees and in other ways, with bodies directly responsible for aspects of Recreation and Leisure, Education and Continuing Education and with the Library and Museums Services.

Contact: MacNiece House,  
77 Malone Road,  
Belfast, BT9 6AQ  
Tel: 028 9038 5200  
Fax: 028 9066 1715  
Email: chief@artscouncil-ni.org  
Website: www.artscouncil-ni.org

## The Fisheries Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland

The Fisheries Conservancy Board for Northern Ireland is an executive non-departmental public body (NDPB), whose main function is to conserve and protect the salmon and inland fisheries of Northern Ireland (except those within the Foyle and Newry area). The Board is governed by a membership of approximately 24 persons, comprising a wide range of fishery interests, local government, tourism, Ulster Farmers Union, CBI etc. It employs approximately 30 people on a full-time basis, including a small administration team at its Portadown Headquarters.

The main activities of the Board are:

- protection of fisheries by the enforcement of the provisions of the Fisheries Act and Byelaws and the implementation of the salmon management programmes
- pollution control
- consultation with government departments and other agencies on developments such as drainage, water abstraction schemes

and discharges to watercourses which could damage fisheries.

Contact: 1 Mahon Road,  
Portadown,  
Co-Armagh, BT62 3EE  
Tel: 028 3833 4666  
Fax: 028 3833 8912  
Email: fiona@fcbni.org  
Website: www.fcbni.com

## The Sports Council for Northern Ireland

The Sports Council for Northern Ireland is the statutory organisation responsible for promoting and developing sport in Northern Ireland. Around 85 % of the Council's funding is acquired from DENI, with the remainder derived from course fees, charges for services, sponsorship etc.

The Minister for Sport appoints the Chairperson and the 14 other Council members. The Council's 62 technical and administrative employees are based at the House of Sport, which also houses some 14 governing bodies of sports and the Northern Ireland Institute of Coaching. The House of Sport acts as the headquarters resource centre for voluntary sports administration in Northern Ireland and the Council also manages Tollymore Mountain Centre, which is the Northern Ireland Centre for Outdoor Activities.

The objectives of the Council are:

- To increase committed participation in sport and physical recreation amongst the population with particular emphasis on young people
- To raise standards of performance amongst participants and to enable those with the potential to excel to do so
- To promote the good reputation and efficient administration of sport in Northern Ireland.

Previous priorities have been driven by the Council's responsibilities as outlined within the Strategy for Development of Sport in Northern Ireland which focus on the three key areas of:

- Starting well with particular emphasis on Youth Sport – a programme designed to encourage quality sporting provision for 8-16 year olds
- Staying involved wherein the Council envisages district councils' taking the lead role in sustaining individuals continued participation in sport
- Striving for excellence through its Lottery Sports Fund the Council will develop and support a number of major initiatives aimed at creating the best possible environment for talented individuals to excel

The Council's annual business plan (available from the House of Sport) identifies the strategic objectives and targets associated with each of the above areas and develops broad details of financial spends for both Exchequer and Lottery Sports funds.

Contact: House of Sport,  
Upper Malone Road,  
Belfast, BT9 5LA  
Tel: 028 9038 1222  
Fax: 028 9068 2757  
Email: info@sportni.net  
Website: www.sportni.net

## Education and Library Boards

There are five Education and Library Boards, one covering the Belfast City Council area and the others comprising groups of district council areas. The area or regional boundaries of the different statutory boards do not coincide with one another, but the basic component of each area is the district council.

The table below indicates which board oversees your district council area:

Area Board	Council Area
<b>South-Eastern</b> Grahamsbridge Road, Dundonald, Belfast, BT16 0HS Tel: 028 9056 6200	Lisburn, Down, Castlereagh, Ards, North Down
<b>Southern</b> 3 Charlemont Place, The Mall, Armagh, BT61 9AX Tel: 028 3751 2200	Newry and Mourne, Banbridge, Armagh, Craigavon, Dungannon, Cookstown
<b>Western</b> Campsie House, 1 Hospital Rd, Omagh, BT79 0AW Tel: 028 8241 1411	Limavady, Derry, Strabane, Omagh, Fermanagh
<b>North-Eastern</b> County Hall, 182 Galgorm Road, Ballymena, BT42 1HN Tel: 028 2565 3333	Coleraine, Ballymoney, Ballymena, Moyle, Larne, Carrickfergus, Newtownabbey, Antrim, Magherafelt
<b>Belfast</b> 40 Academy Street, Belfast, BT1 2NQ Tel: 028 9056 4000	Belfast

There are between 32-35 members of each Education and Library Board, with 40% of membership consisting of elected members nominated by their councils. The number of Education and Library Board seats allocated to each district council is related to council population.

Not more than 25% of the membership of each board is reserved for the representatives of transferors (bodies who transferred schools to the State system) and maintained schools. Most voluntary schools accepted maintained school status which represented a lower degree of assimilation into the State system than a 'transfer'. The Roman Catholic Church maintains most of these schools.

A formula in the order relates the number of transferor and maintained school representatives on each board to the number of children in primary schools in the area managed respectively by the boards and the maintained school managers. The Minister also appoints three teachers, three people with a special interest in library services and the remaining members (usually 6-7) of each board.

In terms of education, the Boards manage state schools and educational institutions and provide for the daily maintenance of most voluntary schools (other than voluntary grammar schools). Boards are responsible for paying scholarships, excepting teacher-training and post-graduate awards, operating school transport and school meals and enforcing school attendance.

As library authorities, the Boards are responsible for the public library service and each Board must set up a library committee and hold a teaching appointments committee to deal with senior teaching appointments. The latter committee consists of eight persons; two of whom are principals of schools that are not normally Board members, two are district councillors nominated by the Board (from amongst the Board's membership), two are transferor representatives and two are nominated by the Head of the Department.

The Boards are also responsible for providing recreational and youth service facilities. In addition to managing their own clubs and

residential outdoor pursuits, Boards grant-aid the running costs of voluntary and youth clubs and organisations within their areas. Various schemes of assistance provide grant aid for equipment, transport, maintenance of premises and leaders' salaries and wages. The Boards also operate summer recreational schemes and assist voluntary groups with the provision of recreational facilities.

## Labour Relations Agency

The Labour Relations Agency's policy is determined by a Board consisting of a Chairman and nine other members (three appointed by the Department after consultation with employers' organisations; three appointed by the Department after consultation with organisations representative of employees; and three appointed directly by the Department).

The Agency's function is to promote improvement in industrial relations and encourage the extension of collective bargaining, and specifically to provide:

### ■ Conciliation and Arbitration Services.

Supplementing the procedures existing within organisations for the prevention and settlement of disputes, the agency's conciliation service acts as a third party in helping the sides clarify disputed issues and settle their differences by agreement. Where conciliation fails the Agency may, with the agreement of the parties, arrange for arbitration (or occasionally mediation) as a means of resolving the issue. In addition to conciliation on collective matters, the Agency can assist employers and employees via assistance with conciliation to settle individual complaints of alleged infringement of rights arising from the provisions of the Industrial Relations (NI) Order 1976 and complaints of discrimination on the basis of religious belief or political opinion as provided for by Section 25 of the Fair Employment (NI) Act 1976 as amended by the Fair Employment (NI) Act 1989.

■ **Advisory Functions.** The Agency seeks to improve industrial relations by encouraging improved personnel policies, practices and procedures. Agency employees can

diagnose difficulties, which have arisen or are threatened, and offer advice on remedial action. Agency officers can draw up statements of main terms and conditions of employment, and grievance, disciplinary and other personnel procedures

- **Codes of Practice.** The Agency is empowered to issue Codes of Practice containing practical guidance that it deems fit for the purpose of promoting the improvement of industrial relations. It is mandatory for the Agency to issue such codes on disclosure of information for collective bargaining purposes and on time-off work for trade union officials and members. 4 Codes are now in operation:
  - Disclosure of information
  - Disciplinary practices and procedures
  - Time off for trade union duties and activities
  - Redundancy consultation and procedures

- **Other Matters.** Responsibilities in other fields, e.g. industrial relations training and research, collective bargaining in low-pay sectors, reviews of bargaining arrangements

The Agency operates a service to the public (5 days per week from 9.00am to 5.15pm), which enables callers to raise queries on industrial relations and employment matters, and to have these answered quickly by experienced officers. The Agency publishes 28 'Information Notes' on a range of employment matters, and copies are available free of charge.

Contact: 2-8 Gordon Street,  
Belfast, BT1 2LG  
[Headquarters]  
Tel: 028 9032 1442  
Fax: 028 9033 0827

Contact: 1-3 Guildhall Street,  
Londonderry, BT48 6BJ  
[Regional Office]  
Tel: 028 7126 8639  
Fax: 028 7126 7729

Email: [info@lra.org.uk](mailto:info@lra.org.uk)  
Website: [www.lra.org.uk](http://www.lra.org.uk)

## Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI)

HSENI is an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by DETI and is the lead body responsible for the promotion and enforcement of standards of health and safety at work in Northern Ireland.

HSENI's vision is to ensure that risks to public health and safety arising from work activities are effectively controlled, thereby contributing to the overall economic and social well-being of the community.

Whilst HSENI is the lead body responsible for the promotion and enforcement of health and safety standards at work in Northern Ireland, it shares this responsibility with the 26 district councils. Together, HSENI and the district councils cover all work situations in Northern Ireland that are subject to the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978.

Contact: HSENI, 83 Ladas Drive,  
Belfast, BT6 9FR  
Tel: 028 9024 3249  
Fax: 028 9023 5383  
Email: [hseini@detini.gov.uk](mailto:hseini@detini.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.hseini.gov.uk](http://www.hseini.gov.uk)

Textphone: 028 9054 6896  
Helpline: 0800 0320 121 (Freephone)

## Invest NI

Invest NI is Northern Ireland's economic development agency, established in 2002. It is a non-departmental public body sponsored by DETI and controlled by a Chief Executive, Chairperson and a Board of business people.

Invest NI performs the functions previously carried out by the Industrial Development Board (IDB), Local Enterprise Development Unit (LEDU), the Industrial Research and Technology Unit (IRTU), the Business Support Division of DETI and the tourism accommodation support functions of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB).

Invest NI's mission is to accelerate Northern Ireland economic development by applying



expertise and resources to encourage innovation and business success, increasing opportunity within a renewed culture of enterprise.

Contact: 44-58 May Street,  
Belfast, BT1 4NN  
Tel: 028 9023 9090  
Fax: 028 9049 0490  
Email: info@investni.com

## Northern Ireland Tourist Board

The Northern Ireland Tourist Board is responsible for the development, promotion and marketing of Northern Ireland as a tourist destination. The aim of the NITB is to ensure that tourism contributes to the creation of a dynamic, competitive economy. Councils, through their officers, seek to work in partnership with the NITB in relation to tourism development.

Contact: St Anne's Court,  
59 North St, Belfast, BT1 1NB  
Tel: 028 9023 1221  
Fax: 028 9024 0960  
Email: info@nitb.com  
Website: www.nitb.com

Core Business Areas:	Key Strategic Objectives:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Creating demand</li> <li>■ Enhancing business</li> <li>■ Communicating effectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Attracting the visitor to Northern Ireland</li> <li>■ Enhancing the business of tourism in Northern Ireland</li> <li>■ Communicating effectively with our tourism partners</li> </ul>

## Environment and Heritage Service (EHS)

EHS's broad aim is to protect and conserve the natural and built environment and to promote its application for the benefit of present and future generations.

EHS is responsible for:

- controlling pollution of air, water and land
- identifying and managing nature conservation sites
- managing country parks, countryside centres and historic monuments
- protecting and recording historic monuments and buildings
- promoting awareness and appreciation of the environment and heritage
- ensuring effective use of resources and continual service improvement

EHS has around 640 employees and is managed by a Chief Executive and Board of Directors. It is committed to providing high quality advice on all environmental issues to assist the development of the government's environmental strategy and policy and to advise on environmental impacts and consequences. It has diverse responsibilities for regulating activities which could potentially impact on the environment to ensure they are executed in a way that causes no harm or damage.

EHS regulatory responsibilities include:

- Control of discharges to watercourses
- Drinking water quality
- Emissions from industry to the atmosphere
- Nature reserves
- Keeping / disposal of radioactive substances
- Waste management
- Areas of special scientific interest

- Identification of listed buildings
- Licensing of archaeological excavation
- Wildlife licences
- Areas of outstanding natural beauty
- Scheduled monuments

EHS works with councils and voluntary groups to ensure that open space on town and city margins provides opportunities for urban communities to enjoy and appreciate the countryside and its wildlife. Identifying and formally recognising environmental assets is an important aspect of conservation policy.

EHS has developed partnerships with local government on such areas as natural heritage grants, regeneration, management of scenic areas, built heritage grants, air water quality monitoring and waste management.

EHS details its work in an Annual Report and has produced a wide range of publications / fact sheets, details of which can be found at [www.ehsni.gov.uk](http://www.ehsni.gov.uk)

The EHS has four Directorates and each is broken down into a number of functional units:

Directorate	Functional Units
<b>Natural Heritage</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Conservation designations and protection</li> <li>■ Conservation science</li> <li>■ Countryside and coast</li> <li>■ Regional operations</li> <li>■ Biodiversity</li> </ul>	Commonwealth House 35 Castle Street, Belfast, BT1 1GU 028 9054 6571
<b>Built Heritage</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Recording built heritage</li> <li>■ Protecting historic monuments and buildings</li> </ul>	Waterman House 5-33 Hill Street, Belfast, BT1 2LA 028 9054 3024
<b>Environmental Protection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Water management</li> <li>■ Drinking water inspectorate</li> <li>■ Waste management and contaminated land</li> <li>■ Industrial pollution and radiochemical inspectorate</li> <li>■ Air and environmental quality</li> </ul>	Commonwealth House 35 Castle Street, Belfast, BT1 1GU 028 9054 6614
<b>Corporate Affairs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Finance</li> <li>■ Personnel, development &amp; service</li> <li>■ Directorate services</li> <li>■ Information technology</li> <li>■ Corporate communications</li> </ul>	Commonwealth House 35 Castle Street, Belfast, BT1 1GU 028 9054 6533

## Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC)

The LGSC for Northern Ireland was established under the Local Government Act (NI) 1972 which gave the Commission certain responsibilities in relation to the district councils. These were extended in 1976 to include the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Broadly, the Staff Commission's terms of reference are to exercise general oversight of matters connected with the recruitment, training and terms and conditions of employment of staff in the district councils and the NIHE. The membership of the Commission itself comprises a Chairperson and 14 members, five of whom are elected members of councils.

Six specific functions of the Staff Commission were set out in the Local Government Act and a seventh, relating to fair employment, was added in 1992:

- **Advisory Appointment Panels-** setting up panels to give advice on the suitability of applicants for appointment to certain posts, including the Clerk / Chief Executive of a district council. A panel that has been convened to shortlist applicants for a post in this category will have the status of an 'advisory appointment panel'
- **Employment and promotion-** all district councils have adopted the Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection issued by the Staff Commission. The Code, revised in 1997, is an important element of your council's personnel policies and practices.
- **Human Resource planning-** involves assessing the probable future requirements of councils and the NIHE for the recruitment of staff and securing publicity for the opportunities which may be available to potential applicants for employment
- **Cooperation in the public service-** promoting cooperation with other bodies in matters connected with recruitment, training and terms and conditions of employment of staff and promoting the temporary transfer of staff within the public service
- **Training and development-** the Local Government Training Group, with membership including councillors nominated by the Employers' Side of the NIJC is the lead body for addressing training needs across all councils, and responsible to the Staff Commission
- **Negotiating machinery-** the Staff Commission is responsible for promoting or establishing procedures for the negotiation of standard rates of remuneration and other items and conditions of employment for staff of councils and the NIHE. The Staff Commission also recommends the adoption of negotiated rates, terms and conditions
- **Fair employment-** monitoring the fair employment practices of councils and their compliance with statutory requirements in relation to fair employment.

Contact: Commission House,  
18-22 Gordon Street,  
Belfast, BT1 2LG  
Tel: 028 9031 3200  
Fax: 028 9031 3151  
Email: [info@lgsc.org.uk](mailto:info@lgsc.org.uk)  
Website: [www.lgsc.org.uk](http://www.lgsc.org.uk)

## Planning Service

The Planning Service exists to regulate the development and the use of land in the public interest. Planning Service is responsible for developing and implementing government planning and development policies in Northern Ireland. The Agency carries out a range of activities to promote the government's key themes of sustainable development and creating a better environment. Planning Service's aim is to manage development in ways that contribute to a quality environment and seek to meet people's economic and social aspirations. The Service employs over 700 staff and has a budget of around £23m. It operates from a headquarters in Belfast and 8 divisional offices.

Functions of the Planning Service include:

- **Development Planning-** setting out detailed policies and specific proposals for the development and use of land. Plans are drawn-up with reference to local needs and link closely with strategic policy, such as the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025 'Shaping our Future' (published 2001) and Planning Policy Statements to provide a framework for developers' proposals and determination of planning applications.

- **Development Control-** dealing with formal applications for planning permission, pre-application enquiries and cases of unauthorised development. Each planning application is considered on its planning merits against a background of law, strategic policies and any relevant development plan. There is consultation with those directly affected, relevant statutory bodies and the local district council before a decision is made. Dissatisfied applicants have the right of appeal to the Planning Appeals Commission. Enforcement action may be taken against cases of unauthorised development. Pre-application enquiries establish, at the outset, planning issues which a planning application should try to address.
- **Other functions-** the Service processes property certificates, which provide information for prospective property purchasers. It also provides an important contribution to urban and rural regeneration by providing advice and staff on loan to the DSD.

**Contact:** Headquarters,  
Millennium House,  
14-25 Great Victoria Street,  
BELFAST, BT2 7BN

**Tel:** 028 90 416700  
**Fax:** 028 90 416802  
**Email:** [planning.service.hq@nics.gov.uk](mailto:planning.service.hq@nics.gov.uk)  
**Website:** [www.planningni.gov.uk](http://www.planningni.gov.uk)

## **Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service**

The NI Fire and Rescue Service, aims to create a safer environment by providing and maintaining an effective fire and rescue service which is responsive to changing needs for emergency cover.

The organisation is committed to improving community safety through targeted use of prevention, intervention and legal measures as well as working in partnership with other agencies and the local community, to keep the people of Northern Ireland safe from the dangers of fire and other emergencies.

The Fire Authority is made up of 17 members; a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson and 15 other members. All are appointed by the Minister responsible for the DHSSPS.

**Contact:** NIFRS Headquarters,  
1 Seymour Street,  
Lisburn, BT27 4SX

**Tel:** 028 9266 4221  
**Fax:** 028 9267 7402  
**Email:** [bhq@nifb.org.uk](mailto:bhq@nifb.org.uk)  
**Website:** [www.nifb.org.uk](http://www.nifb.org.uk)

## **Health and Social Services Boards**

The four Health and Social Services Boards (Eastern, Western, Northern and Southern) are agents of the DHSSPS, responsible for commissioning the delivery of health and personal social services for their resident populations. They are required to assess the health and social care needs of their populations and must set out their programmes accordingly, in line with the budget allocated to them by the Department. They use their resources to secure the necessary services from Health and Social Services (HSS) Trusts and other private and voluntary providers of health and social care.

There are also 15 local Health and Social Care Groups, established in 2002 to create a mechanism for the involvement of primary care professionals and local communities in the planning and commissioning of services at local level. There are six Groups in the Eastern Board area, four in the Northern, three in the Southern and two in the Western, each largely co-terminous with one or more council areas and formally constituted as committees of HSS Boards. The Chair of each Group is an associate member of the relevant HSS Board



The administrative areas of the four Boards are based on local government districts as follows:-

Board	Council Area
<b>Eastern HSS Board</b> Champion House, 12-22 Linenhall Street, Belfast, BT2 8BS Tel: 028 9032 1313	Belfast, Ards, Castlereagh, Down, Lisburn, North Down
<b>Northern HSS Board</b> County Hall, 182 Galgorm Road, Ballymena, BT42 1QB Tel: 028 2565 3333	Antrim, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Carrickfergus, Coleraine, Cookstown, Larne, Magherafelt, Moyle, Newtownabbey
<b>Southern HSS Board</b> Tower Hill, Armagh, BT61 9DR Tel: 028 3741 0041	Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon, Dungannon, Newry & Mourne
<b>Western HSS Board</b> 15 Gransha Park, Clooney Road, Londonderry, BT46 1TG Tel: 028 7186 0086	Derry, Fermanagh, Limavady, Omagh, Strabane

Board boundaries are for administrative purposes only, as commissioners of service Boards are free to secure services from providers in other Board areas. Certain specialised hospital services are provided on a regional basis.

Board membership consists of a non-executive Chairperson, a Chief Executive, a Chief Finance Officer, up to four other executive officers and six non-executive members. In the case of the Eastern Board, one of the non-executive members must be drawn from a university with a medical or dental school. The usual term of membership is four years and members are not normally eligible to serve for more than two full terms.

The Chairperson and non-executive members are appointed by the Minister, not as representatives of any particular interest or pressure group but on the basis of the personal qualities, skills and experiences which they can bring to bear on the Board's business. The Chief Executive of each Board is personally accountable to the Department for the efficient and effective use of resources available for patient and client care.

## Health and Social Services Councils

There is a Health and Social Services Council for each Health Board area. Their function is to monitor the operation of the health and personal social services in their area, provide advice to members of the public and make recommendations on how services might be improved.

The Council for the Eastern Board has 30 members; the other three Councils have 24 each. 40% of their membership is reserved for nominees of district councils. Council membership is appointed after consultation with persons who are considered by the Department to have an interest in the provision of health and social services.

Members of the public can also put forward nominations. The usual term of membership is four years. Other members, up to 30% of the membership, are appointed by the Minister. Each Council elects a Chairperson from the membership for such period as the Council may determine. All members who have served completed terms of eight or more consecutive years are not eligible for reappointment unless a gap of two years exists before the reappointment.

The HSS Councils have a right to visit (by prior arrangement) facilities operated by Boards and HSS Trusts and may guide patients in putting forward complaints to Boards about service provision.

## **Eastern HSS Council**

19 Bedford Street,  
Belfast, BT2 7EJ  
Tel: 028 9032 1230

## **Northern HSS Council**

8 Broadway Avenue,  
Ballymena, BT43 7AA  
Tel: 028 2565 5777

## **Southern HSS Council**

Quaker Buildings,  
Lurgan, BT66 8BB  
Tel: 028 3834 9900

## **Western HSS Council**

Hilltop, Tyrone & Fermanagh Hospital,  
Omagh,  
BT79 0NS  
Tel: 028 8225 2555

## **Health and Social Services Trusts**

The Trusts were established to assume responsibility for the ownership and management of hospitals or other establishments or facilities, previously managed or provided by the four HSS Boards. Although managerially independent, HSS Trusts remain firmly within Health and Personal Social Services and are accountable to the Department.

Trusts are not managerially accountable to the Boards, although there will clearly be an accountability to meet the specifications set out in any contract drawn up between an HSS trust as a 'provider' of services and a Board as a 'commissioner' of services.

There are now 19 HSS trusts, including one regional ambulance service trust, contact information for which can be found at the Health and Care online gateway, [www.n-i.nhs.uk](http://www.n-i.nhs.uk):

- Altnagelvin
- Armagh & Dungannon
- Belfast City Hospital
- Causeway
- Craigavon & Banbridge Community
- Craigavon Area Hospital
- Down Lisburn
- Foyle
- Green Park
- Homefirst
- Mater Infirmorum Hospital
- Newry & Mourne
- North & West Belfast
- South & East Belfast
- Sperrin Lakeland
- NI Ambulance Service
- Royal Group of Hospitals
- Ulster Community & Hospitals
- United Hospitals

HSS trusts are managed by a board of directors of up to 11 members, including a non-executive Chairperson and up to five non-executive members, all appointed by the Minister. As with appointment to an HSS Board, appointments to the board of an HSS trust is normally not representational and non-executives are appointed for their personal qualities and the experience which they can bring to the deliberations of the Trust. In the case of the Royal Group of Hospitals and Dental Hospital HSS Trust and the Belfast City Hospital HSS Trust, however, one non-executive director must be nominated by the Queen's University, Belfast.

In addition, there may be up to five executive directors who must include the Chief Executive, the Chief Finance Officer, a medical or dental practitioner and a registered nurse or registered midwife. The last two appointments do not apply in the case of an ambulance service HSS trust. Any HSS trust which provides a significant level of personal social services must appoint an executive director with a recognised professional qualification in social work.

The HSS Boards may delegate functions to Trusts. Each Trust is required to draw up a scheme setting out its proposals for exercising the delegated functions and the scheme must be approved by both the Board and the Department.

For the most part the operational area of a Trust will be the geographical area for which the Trust was established. In some instances the area needs to be wider and has been specified as 'Northern Ireland' for certain functions such as recovery of children who have run away from the care of a fit person, or the placement and supervision of children awaiting adoption.

## Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland

The Health Promotion Agency was established to develop and implement, in consultation with HSS Boards, programmes designed to promote good health and prevent disease. The HPA receives all its funding from government.

The functions of the HPA include:

- providing advice to government on health promotion
- undertaking health promotion programmes and publishing information materials
- sponsoring research evaluation and training on health promotion.

Contact: 18 Ormeau Avenue,  
Belfast, BT2 8HS  
Tel: 028 9031 1611  
Fax: 028 9031 1711  
Email: [info@hpani.org.uk](mailto:info@hpani.org.uk)  
Website: [www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk](http://www.healthpromotionagency.org.uk)

## Roads Service

The DRD is the sole road authority in Northern Ireland and is responsible for the provision and maintenance of the public road network. Its responsibilities for the public road network are managed by Roads Service, an executive agency within the Department. The Roads Service is required to consult with district councils on its annual plan.

Roads Service's main functions are to ensure that:

- the public road network is maintained and improved;
- the road network is developed to improve road safety and traffic management; and
- measures are taken to implement the Department's sustainable transportation policy.

The Agency's organisational structure is based on separate business units for those Agency staff who purchase services (the client) and for those who provide services (the consultant and the contractor). Its headquarters are in Belfast with four client Divisional Headquarters, each headed by a Divisional Roads Manager (DRM), based in Belfast, Coleraine, Craigavon and Omagh.

(see table on next page)

Divisional Headquarters	Council Area
<b>Northern Division</b> County Hall, Castlerock Road, Coleraine, BT51 3HS Tel: 028 7034 1300 Fax: 028 7034 1430 Email: roadsnorthern@drdni.gov.uk	Antrim, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Coleraine, Limavady, Londonderry
<b>Southern Division</b> Marlborough House, Central Way, Craigavon, BT64 1AD Tel: 028 3834 1144 Fax: 028 3834 1867 Email: roads.southern@drdni.gov.uk	Armagh, Banbridge, Carn, Newry, Newtownards, Seaford
<b>Eastern Division (Belfast)</b> Hydebank, 4 Hospital Road, Belfast, BT8 8JL Tel: 028 9025 3000 Fax: 028 9025 3220 Email: roadseastern@drdni.gov.uk	Corporation Street, Airport Road (Belfast), Bangor, Lisburn
<b>Western Division (Omagh)</b> County Hall, Drumragh Road, Omagh, BT79 7AF Tel: 028 8225 4111 Fax: 028 8225 4010 Email: roadswestern@drdni.gov.uk	Clogher, Cookstown, Dungannon, Enniskillen, Magherafelt, Omagh, Strabane

To maintain close public liaison and facilitate management, each Division operates through a number of section offices, responsible for the daily maintenance of roads in areas that, generally, coincide with district council areas.

Contact: Roads Consultant, Rathkeltair House,  
 Market Street, Downpatrick,  
 BT30 6AJ  
 Tele: 028 4461 2211  
 Fax: 028 4461 8188  
 Email: roads.consultancy@drdni.gov.uk

The separate consultant and contractor units have their headquarters in Downpatrick and Ballymena respectively and have locally based staff at various locations. The contractor unit, known as Roads Service Direct, employs a permanent labour force for the repair and maintenance of the road network. Maintenance is also carried out by private contractors.

Contact: Roads Service Direct, County Hall,  
 182 Galgorm Road,  
 Ballymena, BT42 1QG  
 Tel: 028 2565 3333  
 Fax: 028 2566 2510  
 Email: roads.direct@drdni.gov.uk

More information about Roads Service can be found in its Corporate Plan and Business Plan which are available from any Roads Service office.

Contact: Transportation Unit, Avenue House  
 42- 44 Rosemary Street,  
 Belfast, BT1 1QE  
 Tel: 028 9040 8000  
 Fax: 028 9046 8040  
 Email: roads.transportation@drdni.gov.uk

Website: [www.roadsni.gov.uk](http://www.roadsni.gov.uk) (General)



## Water Service

The DRD is the water and sewerage authority for Northern Ireland, with a statutory duty to supply and distribute water, treat and dispose of sewage, and conserve and develop water resources.

The Water Service consults with district councils and each Divisional Water Manager presents his Capital Works Programme for the year to the councils within his Division to keep them informed of the Department's proposals and to seek their views on priorities within their district.

The Water Service operates through a divisional structure with local water offices in most provincial towns:

## Eastern Division

34 College Street, Belfast, BT1 6DR  
Tel: 08457 440088

## Northern Division

Academy House, 121a Broughshane Street, Ballymena, BT43 7AA  
Tel: 08457 440088

## Western Division

Belt Road, Altnagelvin, Londonderry, BT47 2LL  
Tel: 08457 440088

## Southern Division

Marlborough House, Central Way, Craigavon, BT64 1AD  
Tel: 08457 440088

Division	Council Area Served	Part of Council Area Served
Eastern	Ards, Belfast, Castlereagh, Carrickfergus, North Down	Down, Larne, Lisburn, Newry & Mourne, Newtownabbey
Northern	Antrim, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Coleraine, Cookstown, Magherafelt, Moyle	Larne, Newtownabbey
Southern	Armagh, Banbridge, Craigavon	Down, Dungannon, Lisburn, Newry & Mourne
Western	Derry, Fermanagh, Omagh, Limavady, Strabane	Dungannon

Water Service provides water and sewerage services to over 730,000 domestic, agricultural, commercial and business customers throughout Northern Ireland. It has an annual budget before capital charges of £302 million and fixed assets valued at £4.9 billion.

The mission of the Water Service is "to contribute to the health and well-being of the community and to the protection of the environment through the provision and development of cost effective water and sewerage services."

Contact: Head Office, Northland House,  
3 Frederick Street,  
Belfast, BT1 2NR  
Tel: 08457 440088  
Fax: 028 9035 4755  
Email: [waterline@watarni.gov.uk](mailto:waterline@watarni.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.watarni.gov.uk](http://www.watarni.gov.uk)

## Northern Ireland Housing Executive

The Housing Executive is a decision-making and executive body consisting of 10 members. The members, including the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, are appointed by the Minister responsible for Housing and three of them are nominees from the Housing Council. The act requires that at least one of the members must be female. A member may not be appointed for a term exceeding five years although he or she may be re-appointed.

The top management team consists of the Chief Executive and Directors for Corporate Services; Housing and Regeneration; Finance; Personnel and Management Services; and Design and Property Services. The Executive is organised into five areas throughout the Province, each headed by an Area Manager responsible for the implementation of all aspects of housing policy.

The Housing Executive's objectives are:

- To ensure that all social housing programmes and services are delivered in a manner which is demonstrably fair and equitable, on the basis of objective assessment of need
- To reduce unfitness and improve housing conditions across all tenures in Northern Ireland and promote high standards of housing design
- To work with housing associations, private developers, private landlords and other housing providers and interests to ensure affordable housing choice across the range of tenure options
- To deliver excellent housing services
- To improve services and develop wider access to the Housing Executive's services through new means of service delivery under the Modernising Government initiative
- To promote energy conservation (as Northern Ireland's Home Energy Conservation Authority) with a view to improving energy efficiency throughout the residential sector
- To promote social inclusion by tackling environmental, social and economic problems with the communities affected and with other agencies in a co-ordinated programme of urban and rural regeneration using a community development approach
- To shape and influence the development of housing policy through research, market analysis and information and advice services.

Within each area the district offices are the Executive's main point of contact with tenants and the general public. The majority of decisions regarding local housing matters and tenants' problems are taken in the district office. There are 37 districts and each district covers a number of estates.

The main functions carried out by the district offices include:

- housing applications, allocations, transfers and exchanges, rent accounting and administration of Housing Benefit, routine maintenance and Executive dwellings
- housing advice and tenant consultation on planned maintenance, modernisation, and redevelopment schemes.

The districts within each region are as follows:

(see table on next page)

Area	District Offices
Belfast	Seven Belfast District Offices
North-East	Antrim, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Ballycastle, Carrickfergus, Larne, Newtownabbey 1 (Rathcoole), Newtownabbey 2 (New Mossley / Ballyclare), Coleraine
South	Armagh, Banbridge, Brownlow / Lurgan, Newry, Portadown, Fermanagh, Dungannon
South-East	Bangor, Downpatrick, Castlereagh, Lisburn, Poleglass / Twinbrook, Newtownards
West	Derry (South-West), Derry (Waterside East), Derry (North), Limavady, Magherafelt, Strabane, Cookstown, Omagh

The Executive also has 13 Grants Offices to administer the private sector grants scheme, and to improve and repair properties via improvement grant aid.

The DSD has overall responsibility for new-build provision and funding through the Housing Association movement. The Housing Executive, as the strategic housing authority, assesses the overall level of housing need and in conjunction with the Department establishes a programme to meet that need. The new build programme is delivered by Housing Associations.

Generally speaking, the Housing Executive recommends the District Housing Manager as the first contact for any queries. The next level is the Area Manager, then the appropriate Director and ultimately the Chief Executive and the Board under its Chairman. The vast majority of complaints, enquiries, etc. received by councillors from the public can be dealt with at the District Office.

The Executive has a formal Complaints Procedure for tenants and members of the public who are unhappy about treatment they may have received. Managers set aside weekly sessions to interview citizens who have made a written complaint under this procedure. If complaints are not resolved by a District or Grants Manager they can be pursued at a higher level.

In most district council areas the District Housing Manager holds meetings with local councillors to explain Housing Executive policy and answer questions and criticisms. The Housing Executive is required to consult with district councils on programmes for housing provision, redevelopment schemes and the acquisition of land. Area Housing Executive staff and senior headquarters staff may also on occasions meet with district councils regarding developments and problems in their area.

The Housing Executive has a comprehensive advice and information service. The Information Department, both in the Housing Centre, Belfast, and at Area Offices, provides an information service for the public through the. There is a Homeless Advice Centre at the Belfast Area Headquarters, which provides an advisory service for the public on a comprehensive range of housing issues for those threatened with homelessness.

Your district council's representative on the Housing Council is also a channel for obtaining information, particularly about recent developments as he or she receives copies of information bulletins and new releases from the Housing Executive's Information Department.

Explanatory leaflets are available on detailed aspects of Housing policy and these are available to the public. As a councillor it may be worth your while to obtain leaflets relating to the areas of housing which are likely to

be the subject for constituents' approaches. Pamphlets which will be of interest are as follows:

Pamphlet	Comment
Housing Selection Scheme	Contains details of Allocation Scheme
Claim Housing Benefit	Explains how private and public tenants can claim for help with rent/rates
Homes for Sale	Describes procedures for the purchase of Executive homes
Renovation Grants	Details of various renovation grants
Complaints	A guide to the Executive's Complaints Procedure

The Housing Executive advises public representatives who have difficulty in resolving issues at a local level to contact the Head of Information and Secretariat at the Head Office, Belfast.

Contact: Head of Information and Secretariat,  
Housing Centre,  
2 Adelaide Street,  
Belfast, BT2 8PB  
Tel: 028 9024 0588  
Fax: 028 9031 8715  
Email: [info@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:info@nihe.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk)

## Northern Ireland Office

### The Compensation Agency

The Compensation Agency is an executive agency within the NIO. The role of the Agency is to administer, on behalf of the Secretary of State, statutory criminal injuries, criminal damage and Emergency Provisions Act compensation schemes.

Contact: Royston House,  
34 Upper Queen Street,  
Belfast, BT1 6SD  
Tel: 028 9024 9944  
Fax: 028 9024 6956  
Email: [comp-agency@nics.gov.uk](mailto:comp-agency@nics.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.compensationni.gov.uk](http://www.compensationni.gov.uk)

## Other Public Bodies

### Negotiating Bodies (NIJC, JNC NI)

The following bodies are affiliated with NILGA in its role as an employers' organisation, including the NIJC and JNC NI, housed at the NILGA offices:

- The National Joint Council for Local Government Services: Most employees within councils (around 90-95%) fall under the National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service, known in local government as the 'Green Book', a handbook of national conditions of service negotiated by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services (the 'NJC').

The NJC is probably the largest collective bargaining forum in Europe covering some 1.6m council employees, and accounting for annual expenditure on pay of over £15.5bn. Over 400 local authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are affiliated with the NJC.

The Employers' Side of the NJC is made up of 12 employers' representatives. The Local Government Association in England nominates 9 members, the Welsh Local Government Association nominates 1, NILGA nominates 1 and the National Association of Local Councils (representing



parish and town councils) nominates the final seat. All members are elected councillors.

Professional support for the Employers' Side comes from the Employers' Organisation for Local Government. 2 regional officers and 2 members of SOCPO (the Society of Chief Personnel Officers) provide additional support at meetings. Representing employees (the Trade Union Side), there are 58 members. Unison has 31 members, the GMB 16 and TGWU 11. Decisions of the NJC are reached by a majority of both sides.

- The Northern Ireland Joint Council for Local Government Services: Regionally, there are 10 bodies that make up the National Joint Council. The Northern Ireland body is the Northern Ireland Joint Council for Local Government Services (the NIJC).

The Employers' Side of the NIJC has 14 members nominated by NILGA. Traditionally this has been made up of 7 elected councillors and 7 Chief Executives of district councils. The Trade Union Side has 17 members: NIPSA 5, TGWU 5, GMB 5, Amicus 1 and SIPTU 1.

Professional support to members of the Employers' Side is provided by NILGA through the Employers' Secretariat.

- Joint Negotiating Committee for Chief Executives of Local Authorities: the Joint Negotiating Committee for Chief Executives of Local Authorities (the National JNC) is concerned with the negotiation of pay and conditions of service in respect of Chief Executives. Their agreements apply to England and Wales, but not directly to Northern Ireland.
- Joint Negotiating Committee for Chief Executives of Local Authorities in Northern Ireland: the Joint Negotiating Committee for Chief Executives of Local Authorities in Northern Ireland (the Northern Ireland JNC) is responsible for making recommendations to councils in Northern Ireland on the salary

scales and conditions of service of local authority Chief Executives. In doing so, the Northern Ireland JNC is obliged to have regard to decisions or recommendations of the National JNC.

The Employers' Side of the Northern Ireland JNC is comprised of 5 elected councillors nominated by NILGA. The Association of Local Authority Chief Executives (ALACE) nominates the Trade Union Side, which also consists of 5 members. An independent chairperson presides over joint meetings of the two Sides.

The principal way in which terms and conditions of employment for employees in local government are set is through collective bargaining, where representatives of councils and council employees meet to negotiate those terms and conditions. Generally, collective bargaining takes place at three levels in local government: nationally, regionally and locally.

The national level covers all council employees in England, Wales and Northern Ireland - Scotland has its own arrangements. The national level of bargaining is concerned with negotiating the broad framework of conditions of service including issues that would be considered to be core, minimum conditions.

The regional level of bargaining is made up of ten regions (eight in England plus one each in Wales and Northern Ireland). This tier is concerned with the application of the national conditions within each region, together with the negotiation of any region-specific matters. The regional bodies are also charged with advising on the interpretation of national and regional agreements and can assist with the resolution of any disputes between a council and its employees within the region.

All other matters are for local determination between individual councils and their employees.

Professional support to the Employers' Side is provided by NILGA through the Employers' Secretary, John Adams.

Contact: NIJC, Philip House,  
123 York Street,  
Belfast, BT15 1AB  
Tel: 028 9024 9286  
Fax: 028 9023 3328  
E-mail: j.adams@nilga.org  
Website: www.nilga.org

## The Northern Ireland Ombudsman

The Northern Ireland Ombudsman is the popular term for the individual who traditionally holds the posts of Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints and Parliamentary Ombudsman for Northern Ireland.

The Ombudsman is completely independent of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Northern Ireland Executive, and of the government departments and public bodies which can be investigated. His authority is derived from a royal warrant and he reports to the Northern Ireland Assembly by laying an Annual Report before it. All complaints made to the Ombudsman are treated in the strictest confidence, and the service is free of charge.

The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints is appointed to investigate any action taken by, or on behalf of, a local or public body in the exercise of the administrative functions of that body. For this purpose a district council is a 'local body' and accordingly the Commissioner may investigate a complaint by any person who claims to have suffered injustice because of maladministration by a council.

Maladministration may be taken to cover "administrative actions (or inactions) based on, or influenced by, improper considerations or conduct. Arbitrariness, malice or biases, including discrimination, are examples of improper considerations. Neglect, unjustifiable delay, failure to observe relevant rules or procedures, failure to take relevant considerations into account, failure to establish or review procedures where there is a duty or an obligation on the body to do so, are examples of improper conduct".

Where the Commissioner receives a complaint against a body, efforts are made to establish whether there is evidence of maladministration prima facie (or 'at first sight'). If so, an in-depth formal investigation will be carried out and if an injustice arising from maladministration is established, the Commissioner will recommend a grievance settlement. If that settlement is not effected for any reason the complainant may apply to the County Court for an order.

The Commissioner's investigations are carried out privately, with the findings being reported to the complainant, the district council and any individual who has been named in the complaint.

The function of the Parliamentary Ombudsman is to investigate claims by members of the public that they have sustained injustice as a consequence of maladministration in connection with administrative action taken by or on behalf of Northern Ireland government departments. Complaints made to the Parliamentary Ombudsman should be channelled through a Member of Parliament.

The Parliamentary Ombudsman adheres to the definition of "maladministration" as it appears above, and handles complaints in the same way as the Commissioner for Complaints. The Parliamentary Ombudsman has no power to compel a settlement but government departments normally accept his recommendations. The Parliamentary Ombudsman undertakes his or her investigations in private, reporting the findings to the sponsoring MP, the body concerned and any individual who has been named in the complaint.

Contact: The Ombudsman,  
Freepost, BEL 1478,  
Belfast, BT1 6BR  
Tel: 028 9023 3821 or  
0800 343424 [Freephone]  
Fax: 028 9023 4912  
Email: ombudsman@ni-ombudsman.org.uk  
Website: www.ni-ombudsman.org.uk

## The UK Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration

The Commissioner investigates complaints against United Kingdom government departments that operate in Northern Ireland, for example the Northern Ireland Office, Board of Inland Revenue, and Ministry of Defence regarding maladministration that may have led to injustice. He or she also deals with complaints regarding refusal to release official information under the Code of Practice on Open Government. Complaints should be made to a Member of Parliament for forwarding to the UK Parliamentary Commissioner.

Contact: Millbank Tower,  
Millbank, London, SW1P 4PU  
Tel: 020 7217 4163  
Fax: 020 7217 4160  
Email: [OPCA.Enquiries@ombudsman.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:OPCA.Enquiries@ombudsman.gsi.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.ombudsman.org.uk)

## The Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland

The Police Ombudsman provides an independent, impartial police complaints system and deals with complaints about how police officers do their jobs. Complaints may involve allegations of criminal behaviour by a police officer, or allegations that a police officer broke the police code of conduct.

The Police Ombudsman produces an Annual Report which refers to the complaints dealt with during the previous year.

Contact: New Cathedral Buildings,  
St Anne's Square,  
11 Church Street Belfast, BT1 1PG  
Tel: 028 9082 8680  
Fax: 028 9083 8659  
Email: [info@policeombudsman.org](mailto:info@policeombudsman.org)  
Website: [www.policeombudsman.org](http://www.policeombudsman.org)

## Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

The Equality Commission is an independent public body established under the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Commission took over the functions previously exercised by the Commission for Racial Equality for Northern Ireland, the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland, the Fair Employment Commission for Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Disability Council, and now has the following responsibilities:

- Providing advice and assistance to complainants who believe they have been discriminated against on the grounds of their colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religious belief, political opinion, sex, sexual orientation, married status, pay or because they have a disability. Assistance ranges from giving advice to arranging for legal representation, however, the Commission does not decide whether discrimination has occurred: this is for an independent industrial tribunal or court to determine.
- Investigation and enforcement via powers of enquiry to ensure compliance with the equality legislation. The Commission aims to promote affirmative action to bring about greater equality in employment and society generally. As a result of investigations the Commission can effect change in policies and practices where necessary via non-discrimination notices, legally binding agreements or legally enforceable directions.
- Promoting equality and good relations by combining enforcement powers with action to promote and encourage good equal opportunities practice. The Commission provides information, advisory, and training services to assist employers, trade unions, service providers, and non-governmental organisations, and offers an information and library service to the media and general public. The Commission issues publications and Codes of Practice to set standards for fairness and equality in areas such as employment, equal pay, housing and provision of goods, facilities and services.

- Research is undertaken, commissioned or financially supported by the Commission in order to provide reliable, relevant information to inform the debate on equality issues.
- Financial grants or other assistance for promotional / educational activities can be provided under the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 and the Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 to organisations promoting gender /racial equality or good race relations.
- Public sector statutory duties, relating to the promotion of equality of opportunity as placed on public authorities by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, are overseen by the Commission which assesses their effectiveness through the approval of Equality Schemes, investigation of complaints and provision of advice to public authorities, etc.
- Legislative review and monitoring of the operation of NI equality laws allows the Commission to recommend legislative improvements to government.

Contact: Equality House,  
7-9 Shaftesbury Square,  
Belfast, BT2 7DP  
Telephone: 028 9050 0600  
Fax: 028 9050 0589  
Email: [information@equalityni.org](mailto:information@equalityni.org)  
Website: [www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org)

## European Commission Representation in Northern Ireland

The European Commission Representation is one of a number of official Commission representations in EU capitals and some major regional cities.

The Representation's role has moved beyond issuing press statements and information, and now has four specific objectives:

- Representing the EC's voice to all sections of society by explaining the impact of EU policies and programmes, and ensuring that European information is factually correct
- Reporting regularly to Brussels, ensuring that the Commission is fully informed about

political, economic and social developments which are taken into consideration as part of the decision-making process

- Supporting a policy of decentralising EU information to bring it closer to citizens. Organisations such as the Library Boards, the European Business Information Centre, the European Documentation Centres, the European Employment Service (EURES) and the European Resource Centre for Schools and Colleges all form part of the Commission's Relay of Information providers
- Stimulating constructive debate about EU policies and future developments through conferences, briefings, and media coverage.

The Representation maintains close working relationships with the three Northern Ireland members of the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the Economic and Social Committee, and Northern Ireland government departments and Ministers. It also maintains close contact with the 26 district councils, trade unions, other representative bodies and the media.

The Representation provides a drop-in 'Info-Point' which holds a comprehensive range of EU related publications that are free to the general public. Also, a reference section holds in-depth information on all EU policies, programmes and legislation.

Contact: Windsor House,  
9-15 Bedford Street,  
Belfast, BT2 7EG  
Tel: 028 9024 0708  
Fax: 028 9024 8241  
Email: [antbel@cec.eu.int](mailto:antbel@cec.eu.int)  
Website: [www.cec.org.uk/ni](http://www.cec.org.uk/ni)

## The Lands Tribunal for Northern Ireland

The Lands Tribunal determines questions relating to disputed compensation for the compulsory acquisition of land and appeals against valuations for rating purposes, land development values and leasehold extensions. The Tribunal's website explains procedures, rules, practice directions, recently published



decisions and the main forms for commencing proceedings.

Contact: Royal Courts of Justice,  
Chichester Street,  
Belfast, BT1 3JJ  
Tel: 028 9032 7703  
Fax: 028 9024 8241  
Email: [landtribunal@dfpni.gov.uk](mailto:landtribunal@dfpni.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.landtribunal.gov.uk](http://www.landtribunal.gov.uk)

## Northern Ireland Policing Board

The principal function of the 19-member Northern Ireland Policing Board is to hold the Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) to account for his actions and those of his police officers and civilian members of staff and to ensure for the entire community that the police service is effective, efficient and impartial.

The Board therefore has a statutory duty to monitor levels of public satisfaction with police performance, trends and patterns in recruitment and the extent to which membership of the Police Service is representative of the community.

The Board also issues a 'Code of Ethics' for police officers and monitors compliance with the Human Rights Act 1998. The Board appoints the Chief Constable and senior officers and, in co-operation with district councils, appoints the Independent Members of District Policing Partnerships (DPPs). It also monitors the level of public satisfaction with DPPs. The Board recoups to councils 75% of the cost of operating the DPPs.

To ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the Police Service, the Board publishes an Annual Policing Plan, which sets out the objectives and key performance indicators to be achieved. Performance is measured and evaluated against the Plan, the results of which are published in the Board's Annual Report. The Plan is drafted by the Chief Constable and endorsed by the Secretary of State. In terms of financial resources, the Board is responsible for negotiating the police budget with the Secretary of State while the Chief Constable has day-to-day responsibility for budgetary management.

The Board's general functions are:

- To ensure that the police service is efficient and effective
- To hold the Chief Constable to account for his actions
- To have regard to the principle that the policing of Northern Ireland is conducted in an impartial manner
- To appoint the Chief Constable and other senior officers
- To issue and revise a Code of Ethics for the PSNI which lays down standards of conduct and practice for police officers, must keep to, as well as making them aware of their responsibilities under human rights legislation

To ensure that the police service is efficient and effective, the Board has responsibility for monitoring the performance of the police in:

- Carrying out its general duty to protect life and property, to preserve order, to prevent crime and where an offence has been committed, undertake measures to bring the offender to justice
- Complying with the Human Rights Act 1998
- Carrying out the policing plan

The Board must also keep itself informed as to:

- Trends and patterns in recruitment to the police and police support staff
- The extent to which membership of the police and police support staff is representative of the community in Northern Ireland

and assess:

- The effectiveness of measures taken to secure that the membership of the police service is representative of the community
- The level of public satisfaction with the performance of the police and the district policing partnerships.

The creation of the Policing Board was one of the 175 recommendations made by the Independent Commission on Policing which focused on a human rights based approach to policing, accountability arrangements, policing with the community and policing in a peaceful society. The Commission, also known as the Patten Commission was set up as a result of the Good Friday Agreement.

Contact: Waterside Tower, 31 Clarendon Road, Clarendon Dock, Belfast, BT1 3BG  
Telephone: 028 9040 8500  
Fax: 028 9040 8533  
Email: [information@nipolicingboard.org.uk](mailto:information@nipolicingboard.org.uk)  
Website: [www.nipolicingboard.org.uk](http://www.nipolicingboard.org.uk)

## The Community Relations Council

The Community Relations Council believes that civil society depends on a shared discourse that recognises and affirms differences but allows these to exist in constructive relationships. For this to happen, initiatives at all levels must be able to integrate these principles into their work in appropriate ways.

The Community Relations Council was formed as an independent company and registered charity. It originated from a proposal of a research report commissioned by the NI Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights. The Council was set up to promote better community relations between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland and, equally, to promote recognition of cultural diversity.

CRC's aim is to assist people to recognise and counter the effects of communal division by:

- Providing support (finance, training, advice, information) for local organisations
- Developing opportunities for cross-community understanding
- Increasing public awareness of community relations work
- Encouraging constructive debate throughout Northern Ireland.

The Council's work falls into three main areas:

- Encouraging other organisations, both voluntary and statutory, to develop a community relations aspect to their policies and practices
- Working with groups which have a primary community relations focus
- Encouraging greater acceptance of and respect for cultural diversity

The six main programmes areas in CRC are:

- Communication and Learning Resources
- Cultural Diversity
- Finance and Administration
- European
- Funding and Development
- Policy Development

Contact: 6 Murray Street, Belfast, BT1 6DN  
Tel: 028 9022 7500  
Fax: 028 9022 7551  
Email: [info@communityrelations.org](mailto:info@communityrelations.org)  
Website: [www.community-relations.org.uk](http://www.community-relations.org.uk)

# Reference



## I. Local government abbreviations and acronyms

Conversations and debates in local government circles are usually marked by a liberal supply of abbreviations and acronyms. The following list should help you to untangle some of the mystery. In the abbreviations and acronyms with full stops between letters, the letters are pronounced separately; those without full stops are pronounced as words, for example APSE is referred to as 'ap-see'.

ACSCO	Association of Contract Services Chief Officers
A.G.M.	Annual General Meeting
ALACE	Association of Local Authority Chief Executives
ALANI	Association of Local Authorities of NI (no longer in existence)
APSE	Association for Public Service Excellence (formerly ADLO)
A.T.G.W.U	Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union
C.A.B.	Citizens Advice Bureau
C.C.T.	Compulsory Competitive Tendering
C.E.E.P	European Centre of Enterprise
C.E.F.	Chief Executives' Forum
CEHOG	Chief Environmental Health Officers' Group
C.I.E.H.	Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
CIPFA	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
CLOA	Chief Leisure Officers' Association
C.R.C.	Community Relations Council
C.R.U.	Community Relations Unit (within OFMDFM)
DARD	Dept of Agriculture and Rural Development
DCAL	Dept of Culture, Arts and Leisure
DENI	Dept of Education
D.E.A.	District Electoral Area
DEL	Dept for Employment and Learning
DETI	Dept of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
D.F.P.	Dept of Finance and Personnel
D.H.S.S.P.S.	Dept of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
D.O.E.	Dept of the Environment
D.R.D.	Dept for Regional Development
D.S.D.	Dept for Social Development
D.S.O.	Direct Service Organisation
E.C.	Equality Commission
E.L.B.	Education and Library Board
E.U.	European Union
F.E.T.	Fair Employment Tribunal
G.R.O.	General Register Office
H.S.S.B.	Health and Social Services Board
I.D.B.	Industrial Development Board (no longer in existence)
I.D.e.A.	Improvement and Development Agency
I.R.T.U.	Industrial Research and Technology Unit (no longer in existence)
I.C.T.	Information and Communication Technology
I.T.	Industrial Tribunal
I.T.	Information Technology
J.N.C.	Joint Negotiating Committee
LACORS	Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services
L.G.S.C.	Local Government Staff Commission
L.G.T.G.	Local Government Training Group
L.S.P.	Local Strategy Partnership



M.L.A.	Member of the Legislative Assembly
N.A.C	National Association of Councillors
N.I.O	Northern Ireland Office
NILGA	Northern Ireland Local Government Association
N.I.J.C	Northern Ireland Joint Council
O.F.M.D.F.M.	Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister
QUANGO	Quasi-Autonomous Non-Governmental Organisation
R.P.A.	Review of Public Administration
SOLACE	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives

## II. Political Parties Registered in Northern Ireland

All	Alliance
CC	Community Candidate
Comm	Communist Party of Northern Ireland
Cons	Conservative Party of Northern Ireland
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
Energy	Energy 106
Green	Green Party of Northern Ireland
Ind	Independent
IUUP	Independent United Unionist Party
Lab	Labour Party of Northern Ireland
NIUP	Northern Ireland Unionist Party
NIWC	Northern Ireland Women's Coalition
NLP	Natural Law Party
NRA	Newtownabbey Ratepayers Association
PUP	Progressive Unionist Party
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party
SF	Sinn Fein
Soc	Socialist Party of Northern Ireland
UKUP	United Kingdom Unionist Party
United	United Unionist Party
UPUP	Ulster Popular Unionist Party
UTW	Ulster Third Way
UUAP	United Unionist Assembly Party
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party
UUUP	United Ulster Unionist Party
VFY	Vote for Yourself Party
WP	Worker's Party

### III. GLOSSARY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL TERMS

Bold type is used within the text of the definitions to highlight words that are also defined in alphabetical order within the glossary.

**Accruals Basis:** An accounting concept that requires that income and expenditure be accrued (i.e. recognised in the accounts as they are earned or incurred, not as they are received or paid). Under this concept inclusion or exclusion of an item of income or expenditure will depend on the period to which it relates, not the period in which it was received or paid.

**Assets:** Anything owned by the organisation having a monetary value, e.g. 'fixed' assets like buildings, machinery, vehicles (these are not assets if rented and not owned) and potentially including intangibles like brand names, and 'current' assets, like stock, debtors, cash, etc.

**Audit:** An independent examination of the organisation's activities or accounts. Local Government Audit conducts the Council's annual statutory audit, including an independent examination of the annual financial statements.

**Balance Sheet:** A statement of the Council's assets, liabilities and other balances. The total of the Council's **assets**, less its **liabilities**, will be exactly balanced by its total reserves.

**Budget:** An amount of money that it is planned to spend on, and the income which arises from, a particular activity or resource, usually over a trading year (although budgets apply to shorter and longer periods). An overall organisational plan contains the budgets for all departments. A 'forecast' is a prediction of performance often made during the trading period, and normally after the plan or overall 'budget' has been approved. Separate budgets are prepared for revenue and capital as part of the annual rate setting process.

**Capital Charges:** Charges to service revenue accounts to reflect the cost of fixed assets used in the provision of services. Capital

charges comprise two elements – depreciation and a financing charge.

**Capital Expenditure:** Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed assets or expenditure which enhances rather than merely maintain the value of existing **fixed assets**. Capital expenditure benefits Council over a number of years rather than being consumed totally at the point of incurrence.

**Capital Fund:** An internal reserve used for defraying capital expenditure without recourse to borrowing. It can be built up through contributions from the **district fund**, **capital receipts** and interest earned.

**Capital Receipts:** Income from the sale of capital assets. Such income may be used only to repay loan debt or to finance new capital expenditure.

**Cash Basis:** An accounting convention in which transactions are recorded in the period in which payment is made or received as opposed to the period in which the transaction took place (**accruals basis**). **Capital expenditure** and **capital receipts** were, for many years, recorded on a cash basis but councils now account for them on an **accruals basis**.

**Cashflow:** The movement of cash in and out of the Council from day-to-day direct operations and other activities, such as capital expenditure, borrowing and investment.

**Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA):** The leading professional accountancy body for public services.

**Current Assets:** Cash and anything that is expected to be converted into cash within 12 months of the balance sheet date, for example, debtors and stocks.

**Current Expenditure:** A general term for the direct running costs of council services including employee costs, running expenses but excluding debt charges often called "revenue expenditure". See also **net current expenditure**.

**Current Liabilities:** Money owed by the organisation that is generally due for payment within 12 months of balance sheet date e.g. creditors, bank overdraft, taxation.

**Deferred Charges:** These represent expenditure of a capital nature where no fixed asset is created but which may properly be financed over a period of years, e.g. renovation grants. It is written down against revenue over appropriate periods.

**Depreciation:** The measure of the wearing out, consumption, or other reduction in the useful economic life of a **fixed asset**, whether arising from use, passage of time or obsolescence through technological or other changes. Depreciation is charged to individual service accounts as an element of the **capital charge**.

**District Fund:** The Council's principal account through which passes its day-to-day income and expenditure transactions. Sometimes called the "revenue account" the "current account" or the "general account". The District Fund will show the cost of each Council service and the funding for those services.

**District Rate:** The proportion of the total rate which is raised to finance district council services. The district rate is expressed as a number of pence in the pound and varies from one council to another. It constitutes a Council's principal source of finance.

**Estimates:** An annual exercise undertaken to identify and record the amount expected to be spent or received in the following **financial year**.

The annual estimates exercise enables Council to strike the **District Rate** and set its **Budget** for the incoming **financial year**.

**Financial Year:** The period of time covered by the annual financial accounts – namely 1 April to 31 March.

The accountancy period covered by internal management accounts is generally less than twelve months – typically one month.

**Fixed Assets:** Assets purchased, not for resale, but held for use within the organisation

in the generation of profits over more than one accounting period e.g. fixtures, equipment, buildings.

**Fixed Cost:** A cost which remains fixed regardless of the level of sales or operational volumes, for example, rent and rates. Opposite of "**variable cost**".

**Gross Total Cost:** Includes all expenditure relating to a service / activity, including employee costs, expenditure relating to premises and transport, supply and services, third party payments, transfer payments, support services and **capital charges**.

**Liability:** See "current liabilities" and "long-term liabilities".

**Long-Term Liabilities:** Amount due to other parties, not liable for repayment within the 12 month period following the balance sheet date. Main examples are **provisions** and long-term borrowings.

**Net Current Expenditure:** Spending on services, defined as expenditure on employees and running expenses net of **sales, fees and charges**, internal recharges and other non-grant income (e.g. receipts from other councils).

**Overhead:** An expense that cannot be attributed to any one part of the organisation's activities, but is apportioned over several services. The principal example would be the costs of support services.

**Pension Funds:** Financial institutions, administered by trustees, which invest employers' and employees' pension contributions in order to provide pensions for employees on their retirement and pensions for employees' dependants in the event of the employee's death.

**Public-Private Partnership:** A joint venture where the private sector partner agrees to provide a service to a public organisation. Typically the private organisation will finance, build and manage an asset in return for payment from the public body.

**Provisions:** Sums set aside to meet any liabilities or losses which are likely or certain to



be incurred, but uncertain as to the amounts or dates on which they will arise.

**Repairs and Renewals Fund:** A fund designed to defray the cost of repairing, maintaining, replacing or renewing the Council's buildings, vehicles or plant and equipment.

**Reserves:** Sums set aside to finance future spending for purposes falling outside the definition of a provision. Reserves set aside for stated purposes are known as earmarked, the remainder are unallocated.

**Residual Value:** Value of an **asset** when it is sold after use.

**Revenue Expenditure:** Expenditure on recurring items, incurred in the running of services. Sometimes called "running costs" or "current expenditure".

**Return on Investment:** Profits derived as a proportion of and directly attributable to cost or 'book value' of an asset, liability or activity, net of depreciation.

**Sales, Fees and Charges:** Charges made to the public for a variety of services such as the hire of sports facilities.

**Sinking Fund:** A fund established for the redemption of a liability or the replacement of an asset. The fund is built up over a period of time and invested, so as to produce the required sum at the appropriate time.

**Surplus on Current Budget:** This represents the balance of income over current expenditure. The surplus on current budget therefore represents the surplus available for investment. In contrast net borrowing measures the overall budget deficit ie the excess of current expenditure over income.

**Variable Cost:** A cost which varies with sales or operational volumes, e.g. materials, fuel, etc. The opposite of "**fixed cost**".

**Virement:** The transfer of an underspend on one service budget to another service **budget**. Must be authorised by the appropriate Council Committee(s).

**Working Capital:** The sums available to meet the day-to-day cost of Council operations. Calculated as "**current assets**" less "**current liabilities**".

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