

NORTHERN IRELAND REGION

Chair: Sharon Currans (Banbridge District Council)

The Northern Ireland continues to meet on a monthly basis with an average attendance of around 25 members at each meeting.

During the year we continued to focus on the needs of our members and in particular the HR implications of the pending implementation of the Review of Public Administration (RPA) which was due see the 26 authorities reduce to 11 new, larger councils with extended powers. The groups of councils which were intended to join together at RPA implementation had established 'cluster HR Teams' and the Region resolved to assist these teams in planning for the change whilst also supporting individual members in the ongoing day to day work of the existing councils.

However since the last annual report talks between members of the Northern Ireland Executive failed to reach an agreement on the date and a way forward for the RPA local government reform programme. All we can conclude with the utmost certainty at this stage is that RPA will not proceed on its original designated date of May 2011 and that this year's local government elections will be to 26 and not 11 councils.

The focus is now on developing a framework for a new collaborative delivery model and local government is committed to delivering savings of £438m over 25 years.

SOLACE, in response to this challenge, presented a paper to the Minister outlining an approach to securing Local Government efficiencies and improvements through collaboration and set out an agreed and achievable pathway towards delivering efficiencies and advancing transformation. This paper was accepted by the Minister who tasked the Local Government sector with further developing the detail of the proposals. This work is being co-ordinated via SOLACE and the Northern Ireland Local Government Association and has been who have established task and finish teams populated by Chief Executives, NILGA, ALGFO, DoE and specialist advisors. This work programme has been branded Improvement, Collaboration and Efficiency (ICE).

PPMA had pre-empted this possible turn of events and we ran two workshops facilitated by PENNA at which we critically examined the future role of HR and how we could best influence the important decisions SOLACE would be recommending in relation to collaboration. As an outcome of these workshops we agreed: - 4 priority areas for HR collaborative action, high level governance structure, project teams and high level action plan. Our project teams were tasked to focus on the four main priority areas which we felt could potentially offer opportunities for collaboration and therefore deliver savings.

PPMA met with the Chief Executive leading on the ICE programme and as a result agreed that the PPMA working Groups should form the basis for the higher lever Human Resources Task and Finish Team. This is one of a number of teams whose objective is to identify potential for securing greater efficiencies and for progressing collaboration opportunities on a regional, sub-regional or local basis and to develop associated business cases.

The Region's activities and events during the year have reflected the challenges facing local government in Northern Ireland and have included:

- Contributing to the ICE programme through the PPMA working groups.
- Partnering with the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) on a major event for Chief Executives and HR practitioners in October which focussed on building collaborative learning organisations and creating a people strategy for the sector. Both Dean Shoesmith and Jill Hibberd were guest speakers.
- Development of a People Strategy for the Sector in conjunction with the Local Government Staff Commission and facilitated by PENNA.
- Further development of links with SOLACE and raising the profile of PPMA. In my capacity of chair of PPMA I attended a business lunch with Marilyn Little (Director of **Local Government & Community Policy**, New Zealand Department of Internal Affairs) by invitation from the Chair of SOLACE. More recently I participated in a meeting chaired by SOLACE to establish a new forum for the main professional/officer groupings in NI.
- PPMA NI has accepted the invitation by the LGSC to chair the newly constituted Practitioners Group which reports to the Local Government Training Group.
- Further progress on a scoping exercise of development needs for HR professionals and the preparation of an HR Roadmap and Toolkit for cluster HR Teams to assist them to deliver on the necessary HR milestones and key tasks associated with the major change programme. This work is being undertaken in partnership with the LGSC and the North East Region through NEREO.

I would like to acknowledge the amount of time and effort involved in the above activities and want to record my thanks to our local PPMA members who have engaged willingly in this body of work.

As always we wish to record our thanks to the national officers who provide support and encouragement throughout the year.