

## *Developing, promoting and protecting all our councils across Northern Ireland: NILGA Investment & Work Plan 2018/19*

**This Investment & Work Plan is the third phase of NILGA's Corporate Plan 2016 – 2019 as agreed by the 11 member councils.**

### Introduction

2018/19 sees unprecedented challenges in constitutional, fiscal, legislative, policy and performance terms, for the local government sector in Northern Ireland.

**Such challenges come at a time when the roles of local councils have never been so important.**

NILGA's representative and delivery work with and for the 11 member councils will respond to and meet those challenges head on. The Work Plan for the collective councils / SOLACE regionally and specifically for your council's elected members and corporate team meets the requirements of a sector which is not only delivering high quality services at affordable costs but which is adapting to the wider political and fiscal environment we are operating in.

It supports a **substantial forward planning programme** to ensure councils are sustainable and resilient now and *beyond the next elections which are scheduled for May 2019*. Delivery will focus on regionally co-ordinated programmes which **develop, promote and protect** councils in equal measure.

The Work Plan includes the delivery of strong, evidence based representation to those at home and abroad who can politically, legislatively, commercially and fiscally improve the sustainability of local government throughout Northern Ireland. It prioritises elected member development, new models of investment and best practice, the sharing of very practical ideas and projects which deliver locality based planning, economic development, civic leadership, regulatory and compliance work, all of which materially assists your Corporate Plan and key support strategies.



**NILGA** members  
are made up of the  
**11** councils  
across NI



## 1. Legislation, powers, investment & transfers of functions:

NILGA in 2018/19 will enable an **All Party Parliamentary Group** on Local Government's Development & Sustainability, regionally and nationally, in order to strengthen the roles and investment requirements of councils now and in the electoral period 2019 – 2023.

NILGA will advocate the development of an **Entrepreneurial Strategy** for Northern Ireland – as part of a substantial review of existing policies which, if supported by central government and delivered by local councils, would create greater, sustainable small business and community wealth throughout all parts of NI.

NILGA will deliver key evidence to Government Departments, the NI Executive & Assembly if restored, the Northern Ireland Office, political parties and key institutions regionally, nationally and trans-nationally, on any important policy / investment matter which affects local councils in NI. This work will follow consultation with the 11 councils on matters such as Devolution to and within NI, the NI Budget 2018 – 2020, the draft Programme for Government, Domestic & Non Domestic Rates Reform, Brexit, and will include presenting the completed (2017) **New Burdens Framework** to the NI Executive, designed to adapt the Local Government Act NI (2014) and to fully resource and indemnify councils for all transfers of functions including Regeneration.

NILGA will complete and publish an independent report outlining the practical case for *Devolution within Northern Ireland*, to councils and the communities we serve, in so doing developing and resourcing councils through appropriate practical transfers of funding and functions, underpinned by local, place based, delivery of integrated public services, to better recognise the role of the local authority and its Growth Plan as the hub of a district's investment in people and infrastructure.

## 2. Regional communication, News Bulletins, a new media and web platform, member & officer liaison:

NILGA in 2018/19 will develop a “**Your Local Council: Delivering for All**” – monthly showcase initiative, offering member councils the opportunity to showcase across NILGA's media and partner networks, the work that the local council is doing to improve services for and celebrate the district's residents, businesses and visitors.

NILGA will produce 10 NILGA Regional Bulletins, related Press Releases, provide presentations to councils, party group leaders and SOLACE as required, attend Party Conferences, represent council's best interests in national and regional media and ensure excellent local community coverage of the Ulster in Bloom Programme throughout 2018/19. For all member councils, councillors and officers, NILGA has developed a new, interactive, modern media platform, with improved website, social media and information library links. This is a significant communication and knowledge portal for local government in NI, together with our many strategic partners.



### 3. Statutory representation and co-ordination

NILGA in 2018/19 will work with the 11 councils at elected member and officer level to ensure that the real needs of local councils are brought to bear on all bodies investing in and legislating for our future, whether these are within or outside of NI. NILGA supports the restoration of the NI Assembly to its full legislative capacity but will diligently seek the strengthening of - and resources for - local councils whether this important body is restored or not.

This work will include through representation on and to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee; Programme for Government Steering & Advisory Groups; Growth & Jobs, Rural Development, Peace & Reconciliation and Interreg Monitoring Committees; Strategic Planning & Waste Management bodies, Industrial Strategy roll out and review bodies; the Commonwealth Local Government Group, the Association of Irish Local Government, the UK Local Government Forum, the All Island Civic Forum and the Department for Exiting the European Union.

Despite the present impasse at the Assembly, NILGA will provide a full support service and lobbying role with and for the 11 councils to ensure an effective, productive Partnership Panel for Local Government, modernising this to suit prevailing needs, in tandem with councils, SOLACE, the Department for Communities and all NI Executive Ministers / Permanent Secretaries.

The Association will co-ordinate NI local government's input in to the Employer's side of the National Joint Council (NJC) to determine agreements on the **National Pay Spine Review**, **National Living Wage** and **National Pay** and will also provide regular briefings and consultations.

### 4. Regional and sub regional awareness and network events, Flagship Annual Conference:

NILGA in 2018/19 will co-ordinate 24 learning and networking events in 2018/19 on Planning, Community Planning, Devolution, the Circular Economy, the NI Budget 2018 – 2020, Brexit, Strategic Migration, Government & Departmental Key Strategies including the Industrial Strategy, new Regional & Local Rates proposals, applying the General Power of Competence, induction on existing and revised parts of the Code of Conduct, the New Burdens Framework, and other policies to better resource and protect councils in NI.

**These bespoke events will be free to the 11 member councils.**

NILGA will co-ordinate three Strategic Member & Officer Partnership events throughout the year, hosted across our council areas, on key matters including Broadband, Rural & Urban Development, and Community Empowerment.

**These strategic partnership events will be free to the 11 member councils.**

NILGA will work in partnership with SOLACE to deliver our **Annual Flagship Conference** which will take place on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2018. Conference 2018 will take forward the “**Excellence in Local Government**” Awards Evening, which will recognise across the 11 councils those members, staff, businesses and community bodies providing exemplary public service in NI.



## National Events

NILGA has secured the prestigious *RHS Britain in Bloom 2018 UK Awards Ceremony* for Northern Ireland. Interest was expressed from a number of councils in Northern Ireland to host the event and while the RHS have opted for Belfast, NILGA seeks to showcase all council regions when the 500+ guests visit in October 2018.

## 5. Elected member development including Charter / Charter Plus:

NILGA in 2018/19 will co-ordinate and support the effective delivery and retention of the **National Charter** and **National Charter Plus Awards** for Elected Member Development by all of NI's 11 councils.

In partnership with councils and the Local Government Training Group (LGTG), together with the National Association of Councillors (NAC) and delivery partners, NILGA will continue to deliver in 2018/19 the first ever **Regional Member Development Programme for NI Councils**, as part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Councillor Programme, which will include accredited learning tools on planning and community leadership.

NILGA will also establish with the 11 councils, LGTG and SOLACE an **Elected Members Induction Programme**, in advance of the May 2019 elections, to ensure local council level delivery of a core, consistent, contemporary Councillors' Guide for all 462 returning members.

NILGA will retain the procurement benefits for NI councils of membership of the **National Association of Regional Employers'** (NARE) and input councils' requirements to NARE on workforce, member development and related employment law issues.



### NILGA...

Leads and promotes elected member training and development; resulting in better services for communities



## 6. National and regional policy, lobbying, guidance, publications:

NILGA in 2018/19 will provide essential policy guidance and analysis to and with the 11 councils and submit consultative work to all NI Executive Departments, Westminster, Whitehall and all island bodies to **protect, advocate and sustain** local councils in Northern Ireland.

NILGA will consolidate and develop its all council strategic, regional working groups (SRWGs, see section 8 below also) to draw together cross council knowledge and share this right across the sector as well as to emphasise good governance and communication.

The Association will co-ordinate NI local government's input in to the Employer's side of the National Joint Council (NJC) to determine agreements on the **National Pay Spine Review, National Living Wage** and **National Pay** and will also provide regular briefings and consultations.

NILGA will participate fully in other strategic work at national level including within the UK & Ireland wide Local Government Group.

NILGA will draw down additional investment and collate best practice for NI councils on matters including elected member development, entrepreneurship and economic development, broadband, community planning, infrastructure and coastal erosion.

NILGA will continue the "Making Planning Work" **series**, produce contemporary, user friendly **Planning Guidance**, and ensure that revisions to the **Councillor Code of Conduct** are (i) fully understood within all councils, (ii) fully tested through scenario training & awareness events and (iii) do not disadvantage councils or councillors in NI comparative to neighbouring jurisdictions.

NILGA will continue to support the policy, partnership and legislative work of the **NI Strategic Migration Partnership** (NISMP) and will draw on its expertise to further Community planning & resilience work and lobby for a regional migration strategy.



### NILGA...

Lobbies for change to  
**support local councils**  
and communities



## 7. International & European policy, investment, representation:

NILGA will collaborate with other LGAs to lobby DEXEU and other relevant government departments to ensure that councils are materially resourced for **Brexit** preparations, to fully understand the **implications** of Brexit and to ensure that councils are ready to take advantage of **opportunities** arising.

NILGA will lobby for an appropriate consultation mechanism for NI councils at pre-legislative stage for all matters which are repatriated under the **EU Withdrawal Bill**.

NILGA will ensure that members are briefed through the **Economy, Investment & Rural Development Working Group** on matters such as Brexit, broadband and investment opportunities for councils and that regionally coordinated responses on matters of interest to councils are agreed.

NILGA will coordinate a **strategic group of senior economic development officers** and will cultivate relationships with strategic partners, representative bodies, government departments and statutory bodies to influence future legislation, strategy and funding frameworks

Transnationally, NILGA will work with the 11 councils to bring local and sub regional (cross council) investment opportunities stemming from the EU Committee of the Regions, in particular through our participation in the **iEER Boost** (entrepreneurship) project with 9 other regions. NILGA's participation in this project is valued at £200,000 and 5 councils have participated to date. We will continue to collaborate with entrepreneurship stakeholders to share learning and best practice gathered in the project and to influence policy change in Northern Ireland.

NILGA will provide advice and guidance to members of the EU's Committee of the Regions and all relevant EU Monitoring Committees (e.g. Peace IV, Rural Development, Growth & Jobs and Interreg), and related bodies.

NILGA will work with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) to develop initiatives which enable councils in N. Ireland to promote their investment credentials to 51 countries including Canada and India, and will design a NI based investment event with CLGF.

## 8. Strategic, regional working groups (SRWGs):

NILGA in 2018/19 will enable a minimum of 16 task and finish sessions for all councils during 2018/19 of NILGA SRWGs on Planning, Community Planning, The Local Economy / Brexit, Member Development and Audit, Risk & Sustainability. These will be convened in partnership with councils, SOLACE and government departments, including Department of Finance, Department for the Economy, Department for Communities, Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

Each Group has a specific work plan tailored exclusively to councils' requirements and can be further shaped to assist the emerging Programme for Government, modernisation and shared services agendas.

## **9. NI Councils' future sustainability - research and development:**

NILGA in 2018/19 will ensure that regionally co-ordinated work on future proofing local government in Northern Ireland, led by councils and delivered by NILGA, in partnership with bodies such as SOLACE and APSE, will benefit the sector. In 2018/19, R&D work will cover Devolution, EU Withdrawal Bill, the Circular Economy, Waste Management, New Financial and Rating Models, Entrepreneurial Strategy, Coastal Erosion, Winter Maintenance Protocols, developing a Programme for Local Government, Strengthening Participative Local Democracy, Place Shaping, Commissioning and Performance Management, and **as required by councils**.

## **10. Corporate planning & (key) performance management:**

During 2018/19, NILGA will maintain its constitution, Annual General Meeting, financial, recruitment and other required policies, communications and structures in strict adherence to all relevant good governance, audit and procurement standards. The NILGA Office Bearers, Executive, Working Groups, staff and other representative groups apply these standards fully and an Audit, Risk and Sustainability team will meet 3-4 times proposing KPI and Balanced Scorecard reviews to the 11 council Executive of member councils. Key performance standards are in place organisationally and for all staff members, through the annual Performance Review and Development process. This is overseen by member councils with expert advice drawn from outside bodies and councils as required. NILGA will report Results v Targets in its Annual Report in June 2018 and will fully consult during 2018/19 on a new Corporate Plan for the period June 2019 – May 2023.



**Northern Ireland Local Government Association**  
**Bradford Court, Upper Galwally, Castlereagh, BT8 6RB**  
**tel: 028 9079 8972    web: [www.nilga.org](http://www.nilga.org)    twitter: @NI\_LGA @NILGA\_EER**  
***#teamlocgovni***

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