

Northern Ireland Local Government Association

*Your Essential Guide to
NILGA*



***Policy – Advocacy – Investment
Sustaining Local Government***

AN INTRODUCTION TO NILGA

NILGA, established in 2001, is the representative body for councils in Northern Ireland and is recognised as “the Voice of Local Government”. NILGA supports elected members and councils right across Northern Ireland. The Association is led by all member councils and is supported by political parties at both local and central government.

NILGA and the 11 Councils

NILGA will be developed during 2015-2019, to align representation, services and membership for the new 11 councils.

The 11 councils will cover larger geographical areas, serving a bigger population base. **It is proposed that 8 members from each council and 10 from Belfast will directly support NILGA’s key work and objectives.**

Building on a strong vision for local government, NILGA’s objectives are clear:

- To professionally represent, through collective input, a regional, all sector, view to Ministers, investors, and others, to protect & sustain councils in NI;
- To bring investment into councils and the wider sector for programmes of work such as improvement and collaboration, councillor/staff development and the promotion of local economies and services;
- To formulate sound policies for the development of local government and its management;
- To develop a strong Programme and profile for local government.

NILGA’s constitution will be adapted by April 2015 to reflect this and other contemporary requirements for councils.

A key corporate driver of NILGA is the development of councillors through quality, accessible, cost effective, training. The three additional areas of NILGA’s work are:

1. Regionally co-ordinated investment, services and advice for councils:

Through bulletins, social media, reports, events and publications, NILGA provides advice to councils on matters as diverse as intergovernmental relations, investment for crucial things such as training & local economies, policy, legislation and procurement. NILGA members and officers attend council meetings and other, regional, national forums, including SOLACE and the UK Local Government Forum.

2. Developing improved and effective relations with government:

NILGA members play a key role as an interface between central and local government on matters of policy, legislation, regulations, roles and functions. To achieve this, the Association consults and works with councils, providing a key axis of communication between levels of government. The Association represents councils fully, equally and professionally on matters of common/critical interest and provides knowledge and strategic views to all concerned.

3. Policy and legislation:

Local government’s own policies and its influence of central government are developed through a range of mechanisms including working groups, policy sessions with councils and endorsement after debate at Members’ and council meetings. Members ensure that local government’s policy objectives are heard during the development of legislative proposals at the NI Assembly, nationally, and in the EU, to ensure that legislation either assists or does not unreasonably disadvantage our councils. NILGA has developed a foundation **Programme for Local Government**, available on www.nilga.org

HOW CAN I BE INVOLVED?

NILGA is determining with the shadow councils and elected representatives the product, membership, constitution and investment required for the Association. Nominations to NILGA in the Shadow Year will be made in the last quarter of 2014. These are normally made at the council AGM, using a process to ensure that the Council’s representation broadly reflects the political pattern of the Council.

The NILGA Membership involves:

- Engaging in new ways to get investment into Councils and keep rates low
- Looking at innovation, new ways to provide services and represent constituents
- Representing councils regionally and nationally.
- Attending regular NILGA meetings and ensuring key issues are democratically and inclusively assessed.
- Contributing to the formulation of sound policies to enable positive profile for and positioning of our councils within central government and other key negotiating channels.
- Participating in discussions of strategic concern to councils and developing collective, dynamic actions
- Representing the interest of your council within NILGA and communicating NILGA business back to your local authority.

The NILGA Executive will be drawn from its full membership and is required to:

- Receive keynote presentations from major Local Government players, including investors, service providers, policy shapers, and government itself
- Focus on high-level policy and strategic issues
- Develop and implement corporate and councils priorities
- Provide strategic direction and planning for the Association
- Represent the Association, and councils, to Departments, Ministers and nationally.



NILGA develops policy through a system of **Working Groups**. NILGA's working groups are agreed by member councils and reflect the key corporate, social and economic drivers of the local authorities. These groups are politically inclusive and draw on expertise from councils and other support, creating policy determinants and achieving clear results, ranging from evidence that improved the Local Government Bill, to applications for

EU funding, from training and development programmes for councillors and staff to improved governance and practices within the Waste Programme Board.

The working groups in 2014/2015 are Modernisation, Communication and Reform, Planning, EU/Economic Development, Waste and Environment, plus Agriculture and Rural Development. NILGA will form a Community Planning and Enterprise Working Group in 2015. As well as ensuring the effective running of their group, the Chairs act as spokesperson for the Association, and for local government, on their relevant subject area.

COUNCILS AS EMPLOYERS

NILGA is also responsible for supporting elected members on bodies responsible for carrying out employers functions, including Northern Ireland Joint Council (NIJC), the Joint Negotiating Committee for Chief Executives (JNC), National Association of Regional Employers (NARE), Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public Services (CEEP) and Local Government Reform Joint Forum (LGRJF). The members of these groups negotiate with the unions and take decisions in the interests of Northern Ireland councils as employers.

NILGA AND THE EU

NILGA offers regional (all NI) European programme support services to Members sitting on committees of EU Structural Funds scrutiny as well as to those councillors who have been appointed to EU Programme Boards for NI and related bodies. NILGA's European service supports capacity building for all Local Government Members on the Monitoring Committees, Working Groups and Steering Committees of EU funded programmes. This capacity building takes the form of briefings, information preparation, policy formulation and similar, to ensure Local Government's performance and best interests are professionally and politically represented.



In addition, NILGA provides guidance and assistance to Northern Ireland's EU Committee of the Region's (COR) representatives, as well as to our representative on the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR). NILGA supports a cross party working group dedicated to EU and investment in local economies across NI.

It is tasked with a number of strategic initiatives:

- The co-ordination of information on investment priorities for all councils – the Pipeline Exercise – which ensured that council priorities were at the fore when Structural Funds were being decided upon;
- Contribution of the UK Partnership Agreement (Northern Ireland Chapter);
- Coordination of strategic participative events bringing best practice to councils;
- Scrutiny of regional applications such as the European Entrepreneurial Region Award submitted for NI, by NILGA, in 2014.

Local Government appointments to the various European Programme monitoring and steering committees and sub-groups are made using the d'Hondt process.

THE NORTHERN IRELAND STRATEGIC MIGRATION PARTNERSHIP (NISMP)



The Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership (NISMP), hosted by NILGA, is a cross-party partnership which works across the spheres of government and between the public, private and social sectors to ensure that Northern Ireland effectively plans future economic growth and vibrant, cohesive communities by integrating the impact of economic migrants into sustainable policies and services.

The partnership provides a regional advisory, developmental and consultative function, which enables our diverse partners & stakeholders to develop an appropriate Northern Ireland migration policy structure. NISMP therefore ensures that Northern Ireland's local needs and concerns in respect of immigration are recognised within the constraints of related UK wide policy.

More information on NILGA's work is available on the NILGA website, as is the 2014 Councillor's Guide



If you have any enquiry regarding NILGA's work or membership, please contact the Association's Chief Executive, Derek McCallan d.mccallan@nilga.org

NILGA

Unit 5B, Castlereagh Business Park,
478 Castlereagh Road, Belfast,
BT5 6BQ
T: +44 (0) 28 9079 8972
www.nilga.org

Follow us @NI_LGA

**Policy – Advocacy – Investment
Sustaining Local Government**

Disclaimer: The Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) endeavours to ensure that the information contained within our Website, Policies and other communications is up to date and correct. We do not, however, make any representation that the information will be accurate, current, complete, uninterrupted or error free or that any information or other material accessible from or related to NILGA is free of viruses or other harmful components. NILGA accepts no responsibility for any erroneous information placed by or on behalf of any user or any loss by any person or user resulting from such information.