

**BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

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245.15	Landscape Heritage Scheme – (CCGHT)	<i>Studies commissioned</i>
245.16	Customer Care Awards	<i>Commended</i>
245.17	Townscape Heritage Initiative	<i>Recruitment commenced</i>
245.18	Environment Improvements	<i>Letter of Offer signed Submit further bid</i>
245.19	High Street Task Force	<i>Report published</i>
245.20	Ballymoney Borough Twinning Association	<i>Grant £5,000 for 2013/14</i>

DC.245

20th March 2013

245.21 Douglas, Isle of Man

*Business meeting and
Boxing event*

245.22 Invitation to Isle of Man Mayoral Function

*Recommend Mayor or other
nominee of committee*

245.23 Energy Project

Progress meeting arranged

**Ballymoney Borough Council
Development Committee**

Minutes of Development Meeting No 245, held in the McKinley Room on Wednesday 20th March 2013 at 7.06 pm.

IN THE CHAIR: Alderman B Kennedy

PRESENT: **Aldermen**
F Campbell
C Cousley, MBE

Councillors

J Atkinson
W Blair
A Cavlan
J Finlay
R McAfee
T McKeown
C McLaughlin
I Stevenson

APOLOGIES : **Aldermen:**
Alderman H Connolly

Councillors:

R Halliday
P McGuigan
E Robinson, Mayor
M Storey, MLA

IN ATTENDANCE: Head Corporate and Development Services
Committee Clerk

245.1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

245.2 MINUTES OF MEETING NO 244 – 20TH FEBRUARY 2013

It was proposed by Councillor Atkinson, seconded by Councillor Finlay and
AGREED:

to recommend that the Minutes of Meeting No 244 – 20th February 2013, circulated, together with addendum approved by Council at its March meeting, be approved.

245.3 MAGILLIGAN PRISON VISIT

Council is asked to note the report.

Magilligan Prison – Elected Members Liaison Group

The first meeting of the newly formed Magilligan Prison Elected Members Liaison Group has been held in Limavady Borough Council Offices.

The group was established following the consultation on the Northern Ireland Prison Service's "Outline Estate Strategy 2012-2022". One of the key areas the Minister had identified as needing addressed if Magilligan is to be retained is that of work experience and placements for prisoners. Prison Service officials agreed to develop a strategy to provide suitable work experience and placement opportunities matching prisoners' needs and are seeking the involvement of local Councils as well as other areas of Government and the private sector. The Liaison group comprises four elected representatives from Ballymoney, Coleraine and Limavady Borough Councils along with council officials and representatives from the Northern Ireland Prison Service and Department of Justice. The key purposes of the group are to:

1. Maintain the link with the Northern Ireland Prison Service as the strategy is developed.
2. Contribute to the planning of the service in Magilligan
3. Receive progress reports from the Prison Service and provide a forum for discussion as appropriate.

At the first meeting, Prison officials provided an overview of the training currently provided for prisoners and how this assists in the rehabilitation process.

The Justice Minister is expected to make his decision about Magilligan in the next few weeks and members on the group are keen to meet with the Minister to explore further how the local community can work with the Prison Service to increase the employability of released prisoners and thereby reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

It was noted that the Justice Minister had now made an announcement and a new jail is to be built at the site in Magilligan. Councillor Finlay welcomed the decision stating he hoped it would keep jobs within the area.

245.4 NORTH EAST PARTNERSHIP (INTERREG)

Councillor Cavlan, one of the Council's two representatives on the North East Partnership, INTERREG IVA Joint Committee, has indicated her intention to stand down from this body due to other commitments. Committee is invited to nominate a replacement member retaining a political balance.

It was proposed by Councillor McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor Cavlan and
AGREED:

to recommend that Council nominate Councillor McGuigan to the North East Partnership, INTERREG IVA Joint Committee.

245.5 LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (LED) MEASURE

A review of a further phase of LED projects, part funded by INI and DETI, has taken place to consider which Programmes are most beneficial. Committee was updated on the enterprise programmes Council had already agreed to participate in, led by Coleraine Borough Council, Acorn the Business Centre and North East Partnership (INTERREG) and other programmes available to businesses in the borough. Invest NI have proposed an App to promote investment propositions within the cluster, at a cost of £2,500 to Council. A meeting with Invest NI Regional Manager is to be arranged to discuss following correspondence from the Chair of Invest NI to the Chief Executive.

245.6 YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SCHEME (YES) (DEL)

The Department of Learning (DEL) has invited participation in their Youth Employment Programme, which is targeted at 18-24 year olds who are job ready. There are no lead contractors for the programme, employers will be dealing directly with DEL. The programme is being considered in association with Human Resources.

245.7 BOOST CV CLINIC

Advantage NI have submitted details of their BOOST CV Clinic, designed to boost the chances of young people 16-24 in rural or missed urban/rural wards, getting a job. The young people must be unemployed or working/studying less than 16 hours per week.

Through the programme the young people get:-

- A professional CV that sells their skills and abilities;
- They learn how to prepare for and be successful at interviews;
- Their own "Get that Job Toolkit" – an interactive CD-ROM;
- £25 interview essentials payment + £5 attendance allowance;
- 6 months of mentoring support including "Text the Expert" service;
- A Certificate in Employability endorsed by FSA (Federation of Small Businesses).

Following consultation with the Chair it is proposed to encourage local rural community halls to host a series of the programme in the borough.

IT WAS AGREED that assistance be offered to co-ordinate the arrangements and market the programme in the borough.

Councillor Atkinson advised of potential interest in the programme based on enquiries he had had from young people seeking employment.

245.8 NI SMALL BUSINESS LOAN FUND

Invest NI have advised of a new £5M NI Small Business Loan Fund which is now operational, forming part of Invest NI's Access to Finance Strategy. It is a revolving fund, meaning that while the initial investment by Invest NI is £5M, it is anticipated that the fund will lend significantly more than this over the course of the five years. The fund is run on a commercial basis and must be administered by a FSA approved Fund Manager.

The fund will be delivered by Ulster Community Investment Plc. (UCI), a subsidiary of Ulster Community Investment Trust Ltd (UCIT). An overview of the fund was circulated.

Alderman Kennedy suggested Council highlight the initiative in the form of a photo call and press release.

245.9 CLOUGHMILLS OLD MILL STUDY

This study has been completed and preferred option to progress the restoration of buildings on the site is to be considered by the project group. The project would be taken forward by Borough Services Directorate in association with Cloughmills Community Action Team.

Councillor Finlay expressed satisfaction that work had commenced on development in Cloughmills village.

It was reported that the association had withdrawn its interest in the village Police Station as the funding bid to the Social Investment Fund had not progressed to the stage 2 assessment. It was, however, hoped that the proposed initiatives could be accommodated in the new development proposals.

245.10 RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Senior Officers Group has met to review progress. Almost 160 projects have been completed to date across all measures, with grant aid of approximately £4.2M paid, representing 38% of the total project budget awarded to the North East Region. All measures were 80%-100% committed and a number of the targets in the strategy had already been exceeded.

245.11 EU FUNDING PROGRAMME 2014-2020 – PRACTITIONERS WORKSHOP

SEUPB published a consultation on preparing a new EU Programme for Cross-Border Co-Operation (INTERREG V) and a new EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (PEACE IV 2014 – 2020). A copy of summary of consultation responses, February 2013, has been published.

As part of the Transfer of Functions the Economic Development Sub-Group there has been liaison with the Department in regard to the European Structural Fund 2014-2020 delivery mechanisms. A recent paper prepared by NILGA and the response to NILGA's consultation has welcomed the approach for a local government area based delivery approach post 2015.

A practitioner's workshop, hosted by the Department of Finance & Personnel, was held on 12th February. There were presentations on the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, the European Territorial Co-Operation Programme, the ERDF and ESF Programmes. Following on from this workshop and the questions posed a paper was prepared and considered at SOLACE in early March.

The RDP Senior Officers Group has considered a position paper from SOLACE regarding the EU Structural Funds and **RECOMMENDS** that the SOLACE paper, (Appendix A), be adopted.

Closing date for comments is 28th March.

It was proposed by Alderman Campbell, seconded by Councillor Cavlan and
AGREED:

to recommend that Council adopt the Solace paper, attached as Appendix A.

245.12 EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL CO-OPERATION 2014-2020

SEUPB published a consultation on preparing a new EU Programme for Cross-Border Co-Operation (INTERREG V) and a new EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation (PEACE IV 2014 – 2020). A copy of summary of consultation responses, February 2013, has been published.

245.13 CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS TOURISM PARTNERSHIP

The Northern Ireland Tourist Board has launched a toolkit for the NI tourism industry “Creating experiences”. Following on from this the Board hosted a destination management workshop on 11th March for the Causeway Coast & Glens region looking at a range of issues for the public and private sector with regard to strategic approach, destination awareness, branding, customer relationships, SME support, quality assurance and market focus. The matter will be further addressed by the regional tourism partnership and a further report will be brought to committee in due course.

245.14 DRUMAHEGLIS MARINA & CARAVAN PARK

A memorandum of understanding, drawn up by Northern Ireland Tourist Board, for signature by Council and other project funder of the RIVERS project, North East Partnership, has been completed.

The second phase of development, funded by Rural Development Partnership (strategic projects) is being taken forward by Borough Services, tenders having recently been invited for the pods element of the project. As well as the installation of Camping Pods this phase of development will see the creation and installation interpretation and an Outdoor Activity Centre designed to provide on-site bases for outdoor activity providers, a catering facility, as well as facilities for camping and caravan users. Progress on implementation of this further phase of development will be reported via Leisure & Amenities Committee.

245.15 LANDSCAPE HERITAGE SCHEME – (CCGHT)

An industrial heritage audit, an arts & craft scoping study and geodiversity audits have been commissioned by the Trust.

The final meeting of the LPS Steering Group will take place later this month to agree the final submission to HLF.

245.16 CUSTOMER CARE AWARDS

The Causeway Coast and Glens tourism destination have established a World Host Steering Group comprising of relevant Local Authority Council Officers. The collective is committed to encourage as many businesses as possible to avail of this World Host Training, subject to continued funding.

Alderman Kennedy stated he had participated in the World Host Programme and felt it was very worthwhile. He expressed pleasure at the level of interest by local businesses in the programme which would enhance the tourism sector.

245.17 TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE

The recruitment exercise for the Project Manager is underway and an bid has been submitted by Ballymoney Regeneration Company to Planning Service to draw down funding for year one of the initiative.

The Chair commented on the excellent business, community and other stakeholder engagement to date and the attendant publicity accruing which hopefully would lead to a good response to the public consultation process.

245.18 ENVIRONMENT IMPROVEMENTS

Members will have noted that demolition of property in Charles Street has been complete and site bricked up and secured. Tender documents have now been finalised for the scheme. Committee welcomed news that a Letter of Offer has now been received from DSD and work can commence at an early date towards implementation of the project. Tender documentation had been prepared ready for issue.

Discussion ensued with regard to condition and future of the site, possible interim uses, successful enhancement schemes in other areas which had transformed derelict and unsightly buildings, statutory powers of Department of Environment and the opportunities which the MasterPlan process would present. Councillor Stevenson recorded his interest in restoration of the old cinema.

The Department of Environment has written to advise that funding for the 2012/13 phase of the dereliction funding programme has now closed, with a total of £1.7M allocated during the year. Due to limitations in resources it was not possible to meet all bids submitted. Councils had a relatively limited period to prepare bids and the Minister advises that it is open to Councils who were unsuccessful to revise or adjust their bid as the Minister sees dereliction funding as a rolling programme which he will be bidding to maintain into the next financial year and beyond by applications to quarterly monitoring rounds.

It was proposed by Alderman Campbell, seconded by Councillor Stevenson and **AGREED:**

to recommend that the previous proposal for intervention funding be reviewed and private sector support sought and submitted for funding.

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Councillor Finlay left the meeting at 7.50pm.

245.19 HIGH STREET TASK FORCE

The Minister for Social Development, Nelson McCausland, has published The High Street Taskforce Report on the role of his department in supporting Northern Ireland's town and city centres.

The report produced by a taskforce of senior civil servants, was developed following 29 public meetings across Northern Ireland to hear the views of local traders and high street businesses. The Minister has accepted all recommendations and is committed to developing the local vision, improving coordination of city and town centre management and driving forward regeneration initiatives.

The report, initiated by Minister McCausland following publication of 'The Portas Review' focuses on:

- Tackling dereliction through public realm schemes, promoting meanwhile uses and supporting community asset transfer;
- Supporting business through town teams and Business Improvement Districts;
- Encouraging regeneration-led town centre living

Launching the Report the Minister said: "The nature of retail has changed in recent years and the long term challenge is how we move from retail lead towns and cities, to developing their value as multifunctional social centres that vitalise our high streets not just in daylight hours, but also to maximise our evening economy. The report highlights the sense of deep frustration felt by those struggling to survive and thrive in today's difficult trading conditions. There are complex issues and the report demonstrates the contribution my Department can make in helping to address these. I recently brought this report to the Executive sub-committee on the Economy as many of the issues raised require a response beyond my Department. I am committed to doing my part to bringing about improvements and will continue to work in partnership with stakeholders to make the best use of the resources available to me."

The Chair said that the recommendations of the Report would be taken into account as part of the MasterPlan development process. Report on meeting and support from the Member of Parliament in taking forward its development plans was welcomed.

245.20 BALLYMONEY BOROUGH TWINNING ASSOCIATION

An application has been received from the Association for grant for the incoming year, with a report on activities and copy of financial statement.

IT IS RECOMMENDED that the Twinning Association funding of £5,000 included in the annual budget be approved.

It was proposed by Alderman Campbell, seconded by Councillor Blair and **AGREED:**

to recommend that Council grant Ballymoney Borough Twinning Association £5,000 for 2013/14, as provided for in the budget.

245.21 DOUGLAS, ISLE OF MAN

A very successful boxing tournament was staged in the Joey Dunlop Leisure Centre with Scorpion Boxing Club/Co. Antrim select v. Isle of Man. The Chair hosted the civic delegation from Douglas Borough Council, headed by the Mayor, Councillor David Ashford, at a business meeting in the borough offices to explore business links and the collaboration in the proposed Clan Donald trails project,

which has also connections with the Isle of Man. A further report will be brought to committee.

The Chair said that the business meeting had proved very successful, both areas involved, currently, on town centre development and regeneration, offering opportunities to collaborate and exchange best practice. The Clan Donald link between North Antrim, Scotland and Isle of Man also offered opportunities for development of this unique product.

Alderman Campbell stated he had received very welcome comments from the Isle of Man Boxing Club. He praised the young boxers and Alan Martin of Scorpion Boxing Club. The Chair also added his congratulations to the event organisers, Scorpion Boxing Club and the boxers who had participated on a high quality and enjoyable event and they could be justly proud.

245.22 INVITATION TO ISLE OF MAN MAYORAL FUNCTION

An invitation has been received by the Twinning Association from the Isle of Man inviting representatives from the Association, the Chair and Mayor to attend a Mayoral Function on the Isle of Man on Saturday 13th April 2013.

It was proposed by Councillor Stevenson, seconded by Alderman Campbell and **AGREED:**

to recommend that Council authorise the Mayor and Chair or other nominee of committee to attend the Mayoral Function on the Isle of Man on Saturday 13th April.

245.23 ENERGY PROJECT

The Chair referred to delay in taking this project forward due to work pressures and asked for update. The Officer advised that some delay had been occasioned due to other project commitments and a meeting had been arranged to review progress and actions required.

This being all the business the meeting closed at 8pm.

Appendix A: Position Paper – Delegation of European Structural Funds

NORTHERN IRELAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT POSITION PAPER: THE CASE FOR THE DELEGATION OF EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL FUNDS 2014-2020

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to secure the support from Department for Finance and Personnel, Department for Enterprise Trade and Investment and Department for Employment and Learning, for NI Local Government to have delegated authority for the delivery of European Structural Funds, using a Community Plan led approach in the period 2014-2020.

2. Background

- 2.1 This submission offers a unified and cohesive Local Government evidence case for optimum delivery of EU Structural Funds for the period 2014 – 2020, in Northern Ireland.

It follows over 17 months of consultation and effort, instigated by NILGA, SOLACE and councils and takes cognisance of key strategic drivers, not least the Local Government Reform Programme.

Following a wide variety of informal, formal and workshop related preliminary discussions from October 2011, NILGA formally consulted with the 26 member councils.

From the Council responses submitted during this consultation process, 100% support the need for change in the next EU programming round, based on the following principles:

- A need for Councils to be empowered to deliver EU funds where needed most at a local level
- A need for area plan led spend through sub delegated authority of EU funds, with an overall assurance and accountability mechanism in place which satisfies audit, administration and Managing Authority needs
- A need to improve the governance, flow and delivery of the funding application processes and their outcomes
- A reduction in bureaucracy and administrative burdens
- A need for preparation by way of training and awareness of essential, technical compliance issues in relation to European funding, including State aid, article 55 and the Market Economic Investment Principle
- The use of the new delivery mechanisms specified in the draft European regulations, i.e. the Integrated Territorial Investment and the Community Led Local Development tools
- The desire to have a single Managing Authority to report to, as opposed to several
- An increase in the accessibility of additional EU funds by Councils and partners;
- Harnessing existing staff with EU/project development/administrative/financial programme experience (and creating new development opportunities)
- Addressing substantial programme underspend amidst austerity, increased regulation and budget cuts
- Transferring to communities and local economies administrative savings through effective collaboration with a lean, inter-dependent , all NI, sub regional and local structure
- Increasing control and influence for communities and businesses over EU programmes and services delivered in their area , via democratically elected Councils

- 2.2 Local Government reform and the proposed transfer of major functions back to local government in 2014/15 provides a real opportunity to rethink how central and local government can work in a more integrated manner, aligning both policy and resources to address identified priorities and shape places for the future.

- 2.3 There is potential for local government to integrate key functions such as planning and regeneration to address local priorities using the community planning process. This provides

a timely opportunity to adopt a more balanced regional and integrated approach to the delivery of EU funding and would directly support local government's place-shaping role for their cities, towns and neighbourhoods.

3. The European Context

Local Delivery in Europe

- 3.1 The European Commission recognises the increasingly important role that cities, "city regions" and urban-rural stakeholder cooperation plays in driving innovation and economic growth within the European Union.
- 3.2 The proposed delivery mechanisms recognise that whilst it is the role of Governments and Regional Administrations to set regional policy, the delivery of these policies need to reflect local circumstances and be delivered in a balanced and integrated way, which will best address these challenges

EU Funding Structures

- 3.3 The Commission proposes that for the next EU funding period (2014-2020), Structural Funds should be governed in a more co-ordinated way to deliver greater impact. To facilitate that process, the Commission has proposed a suite of new regulations for the Structural Funds bringing together the existing regulations in a much tighter overall legislative framework. This is reflected in the draft legislation published in October 2012.
- 3.4 In order to facilitate the delivery of Integrated Development Strategies, the draft Regulations provide for two separate funding structures - a Community-led Local Development (CLLD) model and an Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) model for the delivery of funding in urban areas. It is envisaged that both these models would see local, area based partnerships draw down ERDF, ESF and EARDF funds, to support the delivery of projects as part of an Integrated Development Strategy for a defined geographical area.
- 3.5 The new European legislative framework has 11 common objectives, set out below which together promote a more flexible, integrated and cost-effective regime for implementation. This is to ensure that EU investment is targeted in an integrated and structured way to achieve on Europe's long-term goals for economic, social and geographic growth and job creation
 1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation
 2. Enhancing access to and use and quality of, information and communication technologies (ICT)
 3. Enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)
 4. Supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy – including promotion of carbon strategies for urban areas.
 5. Promoting climate change adaptation and risk prevention and management.
 6. Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency – including action to improve the urban environment, including regeneration of Brownfield sites and the reduction of air quality
 7. Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in network infrastructure – including the promotion of sustainable urban mobility
 8. Promoting employment and supporting labour mobility
 9. Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty – including support for physical and economic regeneration of deprived urban communities

- 10 .Investing in education, skills and lifelong learning
11. Institutional capacity building and efficient public administrations

Linked to this are the European regional Smart Specialisation Strategies(RIS3), driven by DETI in Northern Ireland, as a guiding tool for ERDF investment across the region.

4. The UK Context

- 4.1 It is important to consider the UK context as the Northern Ireland Executive's proposals will be an integral part of the UK Government's EU Growth Programme.
- 4.2 The UK Government has, like the European Commission, recognised that cities are the critical drivers of regional economies. It also recognises that they cannot be looked upon in isolation as the influence of cities extends well beyond their physical boundaries. At the same time, cities rely heavily on their regions to supply workers and consumers for city-based businesses
- 4.3 In 2010, the UK Government introduced Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPS) to provide a structure for local areas to proactively respond to complex and dynamic economic challenges. This acknowledged the different challenges experienced by areas and the need for a flexible place-based approach to effectively address these local challenges.
- 4.4 It is our understanding that the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) are proposing that a limited number of cities/city regions be designated with Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) status under the UK EU Growth Programme, for the purpose of delivering EU Funds. It is our further understanding that Local Enterprise Partnerships have UK Government commitment for the delegation of notional allocations of combined European funding for delivering area based plans.
- 4.5 With the Reform of Local Government there is real potential for EU funds to contribute to the delivery of effective "place based" integrated development plans within Northern Ireland, by using the new 11 Council model to devolve combined European funds as part of a cocktail of resources to deliver the emerging Community Plans

5. The Northern Ireland Context

The Programme for Government

5.1 The Programme for Government identifies the actions the Executive will take to deliver its primary focus - to grow the economy and tackle disadvantage – through the following strategic priorities:

- Growing a Sustainable Economy and Investing in the Future
- Creating Opportunities, Tackling Disadvantage and Improving Health and Wellbeing
- Protecting Our People, the Environment and Creating Safer Communities
- Building a Strong and Shared Community
- Delivering High Quality and Efficient Public Services

It recognises that Government, as a whole, must act collaboratively with all partners including local government, to assure and positively maximise impact for the benefit of Northern Ireland citizens.

Local Government Reform

5.2 Local government in Northern Ireland is a key partner in the delivery of these priorities for the region as set out in the Programme for Government – it provides the strategic leadership to shape local areas, ensure local economic resilience, improve well-being and create shared spaces and good community relations. These are key agents in the regeneration and economic, social and environmental development of local areas and the region as a whole.

5.3 The role of local government is to create the conditions for growth and sustainability, supporting the key characteristics of competitiveness. There are three broad roles for local government:

- Giving strong civic leadership
- Delivering modern services
- Shaping the places where people live and work

Councils in Northern Ireland have a track record, individually and in clusters, in the delivery of EU funded projects and programmes. The Cross Border groups for the delivery of the INTERREG programmes can be cited as examples of good practice in Council's clustering to achieve critical and greater efficiencies.

5.4 Local Government is acutely aware that successfully delivering on the Programme for Government and Economic Strategy for the region requires an effective statutory central/local partnership to enable meaningful collaboration to achieve shared outcomes, facilitated and underpinned by a strong approach to community planning

Community Plans

5.5 Community Plans will provide a framework through which councils, departments, statutory bodies and other relevant agencies and sectors can work together to develop and implement a shared vision to promote the well-being of their area based on effective engagement with the community. Across the 11 new council areas, the community plan will form the overarching strategic framework for the area. It provides a spatial and place based framework to co-ordinate initiatives and partnerships with the potential to streamline and simplify current partnership and delivery arrangements. It ensures effective and co-ordinated service delivery that meets community needs by engaging all key stakeholders, including the community.

- 5.6 An effective, strong community plan has the potential to connect the region to the local therefore enhancing the effectiveness of decision-making and delivery by creating real alignment between the Programme for Government's priorities and local area commitments and delivery. It serves as a vehicle for the effective delivery of outcomes for citizens and provides greater transparency in the decision-making process for Northern Ireland.
- 5.7 With the transfer of major functions back to local government there is real potential for local government to integrate key functions such as planning, regeneration to address local priorities using the community planning process, giving local government the place-shaping role for their cities, towns and neighbourhoods.
- 5.8 Local government has an established role and a successful track record in forming cross sectoral partnerships to take forward various EU programmes, including for example, Rural Development, Interreg, Peace and collaborative Local Economic Development activity. There is now an opportunity for local government to maximise this role with a devolved responsibility to deliver European funds and the sector seeks to exploit the best practice from previous and existing council collaboration with a strategic, clustered approach. This would directly support the delivery of integrated economic development, rural and urban regeneration and employability as part of the Community Plan that will be developed by the 11 councils from 2014/15.
- 5.9 Local government recognises that the NI EU Programme - "*Investing in Growth and Jobs Programme 2014-2020*", will focus on the EU priority themes 1,3,4,8,9 and 10, and we have begun to consider potential programme activity around these. This work will evolve with Local Government Reform and the new 11 Council model. Project pipelines for use of European funding will develop in line with the Community Planning process and as eligible activity under the thematic priorities in NI is confirmed; which will fully align to NI government strategies and Europe 2020.

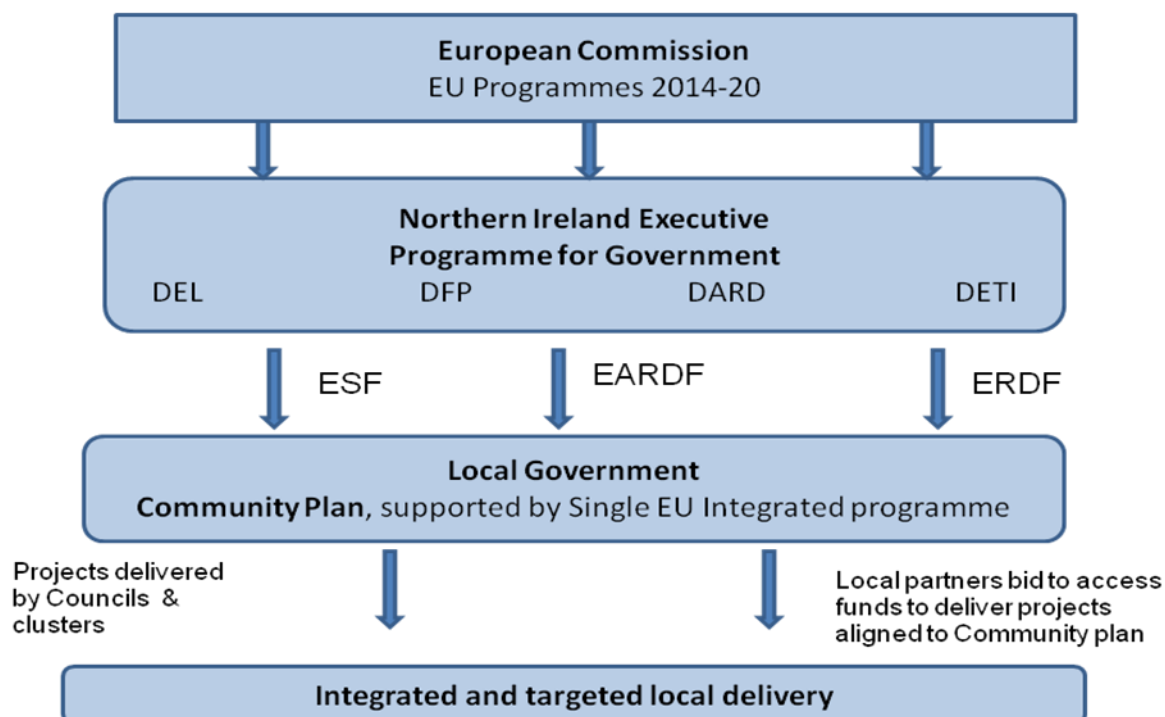
Benefits of an integrated approach

- 5.10 The reform programme underway provides a real opportunity to rethink how central and local government can work in a more integrated manner, aligning both policy and resources to address shared investment priorities for our cities, towns and neighbourhoods. There are several benefits to this more integrated approach to delivering key functions and integrating resources locally to shape an area whilst adding value and maximising outcomes for Europe:
- Greater ability to align budgets and resources with other mainstream council activities/budgets to support a place-based approach for physical, social and economic regeneration
 - Further enhance the ability of local government to create the conditions to support economic growth and competitiveness locally
 - Increased ability to ensure that all areas (urban and rural) are able to contribute to and benefit from economic growth and regeneration
 - Potential for increased investment / access to funding opportunities
 - Streamlining, integrating and aligning processes for the benefit of customers
 - Greater ability to adapt to local circumstances and priorities and to add value
 - Improved connectedness between the local, regional and European priorities
 - Enhanced involvement of individuals and communities in the design, delivery and evaluation of services through a community planning approach
- 5.11 Councils will in effect become the vehicle for economic development and regeneration of their areas as they will also be responsible for community planning, the development of local

area plans, regeneration, local economic development and community development. If Councils have direct responsibility to deliver ERDF, ESF and in the case of rural councils EARDF funds these resources would be aligned to local spending plans to deliver integrated economic development, regeneration and employability programmes which would form part of the community plan that councils have responsibility to develop and deliver from 2015 onwards.

- 5.12 However, there is a recognition that NI Executive and government departments will need to be confident that appropriate mechanisms are in place to ensure that Local Government (Councils) deliver against the established government priorities as set out within the Programme for Government and future European Programmes.
- 5.13 Work is underway to engage consultants to examine good practice and put forward firm recommendations regarding the development of an integrated accountability and assurance framework which should underpin the future central and local government relationship within NI and ensure greater alignment of government priorities and council delivery plans within a wider community planning process. In relation to greater devolution of EU Funds, it would be advantageous for one government department to be assigned as the accountable department for local government delivery to reduce the bureaucracy and expensive administrative burden of EU programmes experienced to date whilst maximising the opportunities offered through the reform process. It would also be advantageous to have early and direct intervention from the Managing Authorities with regard to technical assistance training around compliance with EU regulations, particularly state aid, article 55 and the market economic investment principle as stated earlier. Local government would favour a return to reforming the NI Structural Funds Practitioners Working Group and the production of timely, regular, updated and concise EU guidance notes.
- 5.14 A more place based approach to the integration of core functions and alignment between EU funds and local spending plans presents a real opportunity for local government to deliver integrated economic development, regeneration and employability programmes/projects during the next EU funding round (2014-20). This would form part of the community planning process which councils will be responsible for delivering from 2014/15 and will help deliver real and sustainable change within areas. In essence, the local government view of delivery is as follows:

Future Delivery of EU Funds



6. New Delivery Mechanisms

6.1 The European Commission's proposals include recommendations with respect to new delivery mechanisms for European Funds at a local level; a number of which are of particular interest to NI Local Government and their stakeholders.

- i. *Community Led Local Development (CLLD)* - identical to the current Leader Rural Development Programme arrangements whereby part of the funds is administered at local level by Local Action Groups (LAGS). Under CLLD, a local partnership body would be formed which would develop a strategic plan, select projects and administer the funds at local level. The Commission guidance (January 2013), specifies that the CLLD model is appropriate for populations of up to 150,000 people. The 11 Council model under Local Government Reform will result in larger populations but there is potential for the CLLD approach to apply at a more local level within the region and Council boundaries.
- ii. *Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI)* – an integrated and strategic mechanism to draw funding from one or more Operational Programmes and combined to deliver an integrated investment strategy for a certain area (a section of a city, an entire city, an urban or rural area, a neighbourhood, a metropolitan area etc). The ITI would draw on ERDF and ESF funds (for a truly integrated approach) but it can also be complimented by EARDF and EMFF funds if necessary. The Commission envisages that an overall strategy would be developed for a geographical or functional area, which in effect would be the Community Plan. It is worth noting that a functional area could be all of a conurbation even though it may be made up of a number of local authorities. This would appear at the outset to be an appropriate model for 11 council model or

collaborative clusters of these in NI. The use of both models of delivery in NI should not be mutually exclusive.

6.2 Clarity of the role of NILGA going forward:

Councils have corporately responded to NILGA's sector wide consultation, supporting the role of the Association with regard to

- i) providing membership of the existing and emerging Monitoring Committees,
- ii) offering relevant capacity building, awareness raising and training . This will be delivered in partnership and will build on existing contracts and work with DFP and DoE. To this end, support (indeed a budget) for elected member development specifically in regard to EU Capacity Building is being developed by the Local Government Training Group, which has entrusted NILGA with the co-ordination of same, from 2013/14, aligned to the Local Government Reform Programme.

NILGA will also offer defined regional support to councils and councillors – thereby ensuring forewarning of critical issues and offering solutions and additional investment opportunities.

Through such provision NILGA aims to maintain and enhance it's offer to elected member capacity building and development at a regional level, ensuring consistency of support throughout the next EU Programming period.

7. Conclusion/Recommendation

7.1 NI Local Government therefore seeks the support of the NI Executive for:

- Local Government to have delegated authority for the delivery of European Structural Funds, using a Community Plan led approach in the period 2014-2020
- Council areas to be designated ITI or CLLD status or a combination of these to support the delivery of community plans and area based investment.
- Local government should be able to work individually as councils, sub regionally and regionally as appropriate to maximise such funds.

7.2 In making this case, NI Local Government recognises:

- that any allocation to the region is likely to be reduced from previous levels;
- any strategic integrated plan for the area needs to be clearly aligned to central government's regional priorities, as well making a clear contribution to the Europe 2020 priorities;
- the need for agreed governance and accountability arrangements with the NI managing authorities;
- the need to rule out areas of activity where councils do not have a specific competency

7.3 There is much to be gained by adopting a community plan-led place-based approach where the strategic plan for the area contains programmes and projects aligned to regional priorities and the EU funding timetable i.e. 2014 -2020. There is also much to be gained by reflecting the LEP model whereby EU combined allocations to Councils are agreed at the outset to add value to wider financial and investment planning over a seven year period. This will enable better planning for programme activity, more meaningful outcomes and ensure timely delivery thus reducing the risk of under-spends towards the end of the Programme period.

- 7.4 NI local government has collectively agreed this submission and would welcome an early discussion with the relevant Departments on designation as local delivery agents for future EU funds and a formal role through use of the ITI or CLLD tools, or a combination of these, within the UK Partnership Agreement.
- 7.5 SOLACE, NILGA and the NI Local Government sector has brought together a cohesive solutions driven response to DFP's consultation with regard to Structural Funds 2014-2020. This response opens up a clear partnership with the Department regarding the finalisation of mechanisms for delivery and offers clarity of role and responsibility for the councils and its representative bodies going forward.