



# Reform Inform

Keeping you updated on Local Government Reform

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## Delay and changes to powers DSD will provide to councils

DSD has announced some changes to the powers it is providing to councils and the timeframe surrounding it. The main changes are:

1. Urban regeneration and community development powers will now be conferred in April 2016 instead of April 2015 as originally planned.
2. Housing powers will not transfer at this time. This involved two housing powers relating to 'registration of houses in multiple occupation' and 'housing unfitness responsibilities, including repair and demolition notices'.

A written statement from Social Development Minister Mervyn Storey concerning these changes can be read at <http://bit.ly/10VcZY0>

Commenting on the news, Environment Minister Mark H Durkan said: "I recognise the efforts that Minister Storey has made to allow this legislation to proceed. It's very important to have regeneration at a local level. These functions combined with local planning, local economic development, local tourism and councils' current functions, will truly allow councils to be more flexible to local need and make a difference to how they shape their areas and communities.

"However, given how these functions knit together, it is disappointing that the powers will not confer until 2016. I therefore expect DSD to engage with the new councils during their first year of operation to ensure that its physical regeneration activity fits with the physical plans that councils will develop for their areas. I also expect DSD to play a full and active role in the community planning process that councils will lead."

## Local government employee and councillor working relationship protocol

With councillors' new responsibilities and the introduction of the councillors' code of conduct, the working relationship protocol between councillors and local government officers needed to be revised. This has now been done in conjunction with local government and trade unions. The revised protocol sets out the expected working relationship between councillors and employees, and advises of the steps to be taken to deal with concerns. It is available to view at [www.doeni.gov.uk/2014-circulars.htm](http://www.doeni.gov.uk/2014-circulars.htm)

The protocol will also be incorporated as Appendix 2 in the Local Government Staff Commission revised staff code of conduct for local government employees.

## DOE consultations and guidance

### Community planning statutory partner regulations

These set out draft proposals on the organisations that should join with councils as statutory partners to put in place and help deliver community planning. The consultation closes on 12 December 2014.

### Charters and status regulations

These set out draft proposals to allow the new councils to make decisions on their borough or city status. This consultation also closes on 12 December 2014.

### Compensation for loss of employment regulations

The proposed regulations set out the compensation arrangements for local government employees who may face redundancy as a result of local government reform. The consultation will close on 5 January 2015.

### Transferred Functions Grant regulations

The regulations will introduce the mechanism by which those functions that are transferring from central to local government in April 2015 will be financed post transfer. The consultation will close on 12 January 2015. For more information on consultations, visit [www.doeni.gov.uk/local\\_government\\_consultations](http://www.doeni.gov.uk/local_government_consultations)

### **Filling positions of responsibility**

Guidance has been issued on filling positions of responsibility and appointing councillors to committees. This can be viewed at [www.doeni.gov.uk/2014-circulars.htm](http://www.doeni.gov.uk/2014-circulars.htm)

## Department of Regional Development legislation

### **Off-street parking**

On 13 October, the Department for Regional Development (DRD) introduced its Off-Street Parking (Functions of District Councils) Bill 2014 to the Assembly. This will enable it to transfer and share powers to allow the operation of off-street parking by the new councils.

### **Donaghadee Harbour**

DRD is also currently consulting on draft legislation to transfer the ownership and responsibility for Donaghadee Harbour to the new North Down and Ards District Council. The consultation paper is available to view at [www.drdni.gov.uk](http://www.drdni.gov.uk) and the closing date for responses is 24 November 2014.

Alongside this legislation, transfer schemes will be used which will detail the assets and liabilities, and staff (relating to Donaghadee Harbour) associated with the transfers.

## Focus on... Derry City and Strabane District Council's progress on Community Planning

Work is progressing well on the exciting and challenging changeover to the new Derry City and Strabane District Council in April 2015.

The new Shadow Council has been meeting since June 2014 and is actively engaging with its staff and stakeholders.

The council has already hosted two very productive workshops with representatives from the community, statutory and private sectors. These events aimed to develop awareness and build participation and consensus on the process to deliver community planning in the new Derry City and Strabane District Council area.

The first session was held on 8 July 2014 and the second event was held on 23 September 2014 (pictured below), attended by approximately 260 delegates. Community Places has been supporting the council in the facilitation of these workshops and in its preparations for community planning.



A Task and Finish Working Group comprising of nominated people from the community, voluntary, business and statutory sectors will join elected members and officers to co-design this council's approach to research and data gathering. The group shall also develop the outline community planning framework and feedback its

proposals to a wider stakeholder plenary session in early 2015. The council aims to have its Community Planning Partnership in place in spring 2015.

The new council has also agreed a detailed capacity building programme for staff and elected members. On 30 July 2014, 100 staff from a range of departments across both of the existing councils and transferring functions participated in a staff engagement session. This was followed by a staff induction session on 2 October, again providing valuable feedback as part of the governance, corporate planning and organisational design process.

Commenting on the reform process, Chief Executive John Kelpie said: “Our new organisation has a very ambitious work programme. I am confident that, with the strong civic leadership of our elected members and our dedicated officer team, we will create a new council which will deliver tangible social, economic and environmental outcomes for our citizens.”