

20 July 2006

REVIEW OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION MAKING GOOD PROGRESS – HANSON

The programme to transform the public sector is making good progress and on target to meet key dates, Minister of State David Hanson MP has said.

Mr Hanson was updating Parliament on the Review of Public Administration, (RPA), for which he has Ministerial responsibility. He said: **“The Review of Public Administration represents the most comprehensive reform of public administration and services in Northern Ireland for over 30 years.**

“Implementation of these decisions, which involve radical restructuring of health and social services, education and local government, is now proceeding across a wide range of organisations and services. Robust programme and project management arrangements are in place to deliver implementation. These include a Local Government Taskforce which is making a vital contribution to our new vision for local government. A Steering Group which is representative of the various sectors is led by the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service and formal arrangements are also in place to consult with trade unions as the implementation programme proceeds.

“The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Peter Hain, has tasked me with overseeing implementation of these reforms.

“On 8 March 2006, this House was informed of the establishment of a Public Service Commission to safeguard the interests of staff affected

by decisions on the review and ensure a smooth transition for them to new organisations.

“Restructuring of Education and Health and Social Services is to be complete by April 2008. This is to include the establishment of new regional Authorities in each sector and early progress is being achieved towards this with the appointment of a Chief Executive (Designate) of the Health and Social Services Authority. A new Library Authority will also be created by this date. Transformation of health and social services is already well under way. Eighteen Health and Social Services Trusts are to be reduced to 5 larger Trusts by 1 April 2007. Legislation for these is already in place and they will operate in shadow form from 1 August 2006. The Chairs of these Trusts have been appointed and a competition to appoint the Chief Executives has just been completed. We intend to appoint a Chief Executive (Designate) of the Education and Skills Authority in the Autumn.

“Seven pieces of primary legislation are required to implement RPA decisions. One of these is already in operation enabling the appointment of a Local Government Boundaries Commissioner on 1 June 2006 and setting out the procedures to be adopted by the Commissioner in drawing the boundaries of the proposed seven new district council areas. Three of the remaining six pieces of legislation will deal with health and social services, education and local government restructuring. The others will deal respectively with libraries, transfers of functions from central to local government and residual issues in relation to public bodies, including the removal of nomination rights to the boards of such bodies.

“I shall keep this House informed of progress as preparation of these legislation proposals to implement this major restructuring programme continues.”

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