

REVIEW OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Timing and phasing

1. Why the delay?

The emphasis must be on improving services, through a programme that includes sufficient time to prepare for, and manage change through to completion. We need to ensure adequate time for discussion and scrutiny by the Assembly and the Education Committee, which the original timetable would not have allowed. The proposals are complex, and are taking longer to prepare than hoped, and the legislative process is inherently longer than under direct rule.

It is hoped that, by working with the Assembly Education Committee, the Bill may be passed in time to allow implementation of the new arrangements earlier than April 2009.

2. What is the earliest possible date for implementation?

If the legislation passed through the Assembly quickly, implementation may be possible in late autumn 2008.

3. When will efficiency savings be realised?

Delaying the legislation will not necessarily delay the savings. A convergence programme will be put in place, with the aim of reconfiguring key services and functions in preparation for the establishment of the ESA as soon as possible.

Staff costs account for some 70% of the education budget, and it is inevitable that the greater part of the efficiency savings will be found in that area. The early realisation of those savings will depend on the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) bid that has been submitted.

4. If there is to be a delay, why not complete the reforms in a single phase?

The reforms are too complex to take forward in a single phase. To attempt to do so would risk damaging delay. It is important to make early progress on the key structural changes that will enable the provisions of better services to education providers, and higher standards of performance.

5. What is the timescale for a second Bill?

The aim would be to implement the second Bill as soon as possible after the first, and within a year at most.

6. Will there be an equality impact assessment?

Yes. An assessment of the proposals in the first Bill will be carried out in the coming months, as part of an ongoing programme of equality impact assessments as key milestones are reached.

7. What is the rationale for the split between the content of the first and second Bills?

The first Bill will secure the necessary structural changes to education administration. This will enable the provision of better support services to schools and other education providers, which in turn will enable better outcomes.

The second Bill would focus on area-based planning, the reconfiguration of boards of governors, and establishing a single employing authority for all schools. These are complex areas, and there is a need for further policy work and engagement with stakeholders before proceeding.

8. Can you afford to wait for the second Bill to introduce area-based planning?

We can begin to develop an area-based planning approach now, using existing legislative provisions and administrative arrangements. The

experience gained will feed into the development of specific proposals for the second Bill.

The ESA

9. How will the membership be appointed?

The ESA will have some 50,000 staff, an annual budget of £1.7 billion, and the responsibility for delivering a key public service. We need to ensure that the members of the Authority have the skills and competence to discharge that responsibility, and that the democratic accountability of this key public service is ensured.

No decision has been taken on whether local councils should have nomination rights to the authority. There are a number of factors to be considered, including the accountability of the ESA to the Education Committee and the Assembly, and ensuring that the size and composition of its membership are appropriate to ensure effectiveness and efficiency.

Proposals on this matter will be brought back to the Executive in due course.

10. Where will the headquarters be located?

It is too early to say. Whilst this will be an important decision, its significance should not be overstated. There is no intention to have a huge HQ but rather to follow a decentralised model. The HQ will contain those functions that need to be grouped together and located close to the Chief Executive.

There will be other functions that are best brought together (eg finance, accounting, payroll) and these could be in various centres, making full use of modern ICT. There will also be a local presence for services that are best situated close to the point of delivery. Decisions on location will be taken in line with the RPA location guiding principles that are being finalised following consultation. All location decisions will be equality screened and subject to Equality Impact Assessment where appropriate.

11. What will the second tier management structure be?

This is still under consideration. Initial draft proposals were circulated for comment to stakeholders. Revised proposals will be brought forward for the Minister's consideration and approval in the near future.

It will be important that ESA's 2nd tier structure is sufficient to ensure that it can fulfil the very substantial roles that will be required. This is a very large organisation (£1.7b annual recurrent spend, £3b capital over the next 10 years, over 50,000 staff), dealing with a huge organisational change agenda as well as an extensive education change agenda and we must make sure it has sufficient senior staff with the calibre, experience, knowledge and skills to lead the organisation successfully.

12. Will you retain jobs in their current locations?

It is not possible to comment on specific locations at this point. The location of jobs in the ESA will be determined by the need to provide high quality, modern and responsive education services, taking proper account of equality, efficiency and effectiveness.

Decisions will be taken in line with the RPA location guiding principles that are being finalised following consultation.

13. How many administration jobs will be lost?

It is too early to say. The ESA implementation team has compiled a database of the workforce in existing organisations, and is in the early stages of designing new service delivery arrangements and modelling the workforce for the new organisation. That work will take some time to complete.

Every effort will be made to avoid compulsory redundancies and to reduce voluntary redundancies. The vacancy control policy, currently in operation, will be important in facilitating this.

14. How will you ensure co-terminosity with other public services?

It is not proposed to specify the sub-regional structure of the ESA in legislation. This will ensure that there is sufficient flexibility to achieve co-terminosity with other key public services, and the structure of local government.

Sectoral support

15. What is the rationale for sectoral support?

We will continue to have a pluralist system of school types, each with their own distinctive character and ethos. It is right that each sector should have a modest amount of professional capacity to represent its interests. This will be of particular value in equipping the sectors to engage with the ESA and each other, to build the collaboration that will be necessary to meet the challenges of delivering the new curriculum and modernising the schools estate. This role will complement - but not overlap with - the role of the ESA.

16. What will it cost?

The total cost figure will be known when business cases have been developed, but it is expected to be significantly less than the current level of expenditure on sectoral organisations.

17. What about representation for controlled schools?

We need to ensure that there is an effective voice for publicly-owned schools (they will no longer be known as controlled schools), as well as capacity for the Transferors' Representative Council.

Voluntary grammar schools and grant-maintained integrated schools

18. Why not leave the employer arrangements for these schools as they are?

Having a single employing authority will lead to more coherent and effective planning and development of the workforce, and a greater capacity to respond to the challenges posed by demographic change, the need for sustainable schools, and the need for collaboration to deliver the curriculum. Those challenges face schools of all types, and our response will be most effective if we have a single employing authority to address strategic workforce planning issues. This will complement the leadership role of boards of governors, who will continue to make the key employment decisions within schools.

Youth services

19. Should youth services transfer to local government?

Youth services are an important part of the education system. The benefits that they bring far outweigh the expenditure they receive, particularly for the most marginalised and disadvantaged young people in our society.

The RPA proposals suggested that the link between formal and non-formal education should be retained, and this received overwhelming support during consultation.

No evidence has been presented for the need for change, or of any significant support for change amongst stakeholders.

14 to 19 curriculum

20. Since DEL is not transferring administrative functions to ESA, how will the 14-19 curriculum be delivered successfully?

Both DE and DEL will continue to work closely together on policy, and to foster close working relationships between the ESA and the Further Education Colleges, particularly in relation to area-based planning. This will be the key to ensuring the planning of the estate and the delivery of

the curriculum in a way that places the needs of young people before the needs of organisations.

21. What will the relationship be between the Library Authority and the ESA?

The Library Authority and the ESA will each have skills that would benefit the other organisation. Both organisations will examine opportunities for co-operation to ensure that maximum efficiency and effectiveness are maximised.