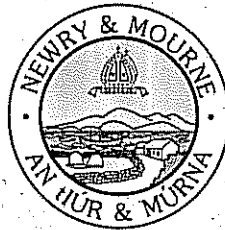




Teach Uí Aogáin,  
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Comhairle an Iúir & Mhúrn  
Newry & Mourne District Council

Cléireach & Príomhfheimeannach – Clerk & Chief Executive  
Thomas McCall

Ar dTag / 16 November 2009

Bhur dTag / Your Ref:

Dáta / Date:

Dear Jacqui

Re: Independent Review of Economic Policy

Newry and Mourne District Council welcome the opportunity to respond to the recent Independent Review of Economic Policy. Our Council considered the published final report at its Economic Development Committee meeting held on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2009. Following ongoing consultation with relevant stakeholders including the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA), South East Economic Development members (SEED) and Newry and Mourne Enterprise Agency please find below the key points to consider:

1. It is apparent from the document that there is a low level of recognition of role of Local Authorities in the management and delivery of economic development activity in Northern Ireland. There is no doubt Newry and Mourne District Council is to the fore in directly delivering many strategic projects and programmes within our district, regionally, cross border and internationally. Indirectly we are also leaders in forming and participating in partnerships to deliver on all aspects of development and have been held up as a model of good practice.
2. Local Economic Development has evolved and continued to grow in recent years and all Councils including our own Council have a high degree of responsibility in this field. This has not been recognised in the document. Council's ability to raise funding from rates for economic development has seen a significant contribution at a local level for its local economic development activity.
3. With the impending Review of Public Administration (RPA) and the proposed increase in local economic development functions this would need to be detailed. The review needs to acknowledge this and in turn show how NI policy will include what local authorities will do post RPA. Also the development of Community Plans and Power of Well-being will lead to all Central Government Departments and agencies beginning to liaise and work more closely with Local Authorities when developing strategies and actions.
4. In relation to roles and responsibilities for Economic Policy our Council believes there is a real need for more clarity on how Local Authorities

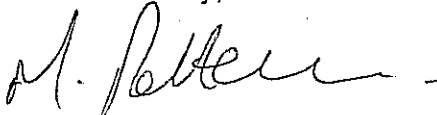
factor into this. Under RPA Local Authorities will have a range of new functions around Planning and Rural Development?

5. The proposal to develop a 'Department of the Economy' in principle appears beneficial however more detail on this thinking would be required and in particular how Local Authorities as a key driver in local economic development will engage with this new Department on formulating strategy and policy.
6. It should also be taken into account that feedback from many Councils on the ground highlight that more communication and greater complementing of activity is required between the Local Authorities and INI and DETI. All too often issues of overlap of economic function delivery are being raised and this is without doubt stifling much needed economic activity at grass roots level. Newry and Mourne District Council as with all local Councils are working daily within their communities, liaising with local Councillors, the private, public and statutory sectors and this needs to be taken into account as a major form of delivery. This partnership approach is key to the successful implementation of all economic policy directives and programme activity.
7. If the proposals to develop a small business support unit are to be progressed it is essential that the role of Local Enterprise Agencies be factored in. In Newry and Mourne and indeed in NI as a whole they play a vital role in support of small business. This needs to be recognized and built on.
8. Increased assistance and in particular financial resources must be adequate and made available to ensure the majority of required action is undertaken to meet the needs of the current and changing economy.

In conclusion, Newry and Mourne District Council would advocate that Local Government is ideally placed to co-ordinate and deliver an integrated approach to local economic development based upon the needs of our communities. This is paramount to the successful implementation of the local economic functions in Northern Ireland. This should be detailed to a greater degree than currently alluded to in the existing documentation. Our Council believes that effective, direct engagement on policy formulation with all local authorities is essential.

If you wish to discuss any of the comments provided please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,



Martin Patterson  
Assistant Enterprise Development Officer.