

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The Northern Ireland Local Government Sustainable Development Forum (“the SD Forum”) will support Councils to comply with legislative requirements around sustainable development, including the Statutory Duty, by developing a platform through which they can collaborate on sustainable development issues across all Council functions and services, and share best practice.

2. Roles and Objectives

The SD Forum has been established to:

- Raise the profile of sustainable development within local government.
- Take an active role in providing advice to Councils on policies and strategies that will enable them to demonstrate compliance with the Statutory Duty for Sustainable Development and the incorporation of sustainable development into Community Planning.
- Provide practical support to help Councils integrate sustainable development objectives and principles into their Corporate Plans, Community Plans and service level business delivery plans.
- Enable Councils to work collaboratively and share examples of good practice, with an emphasis on reporting sustainability performance improvement.
- Support Councils to develop community plans that meet the legislative objective of ‘contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in Northern Ireland’.
- Assist Councils with the integration of sustainable development into all Council services and functions, especially those that are often perceived as being irrelevant e.g. human resources, building control and procurement.
- Develop effective communication mechanisms between central and local government and use these to share tools for the implementation of sustainability strategies and action plans within Councils.
- Identify priority areas for action and sustainability issues that require more specific attention and guidance e.g. through the arrangement of additional capacity building programmes, conferences or seminars.
- Any other objectives or activities that the SD Forum may agree are necessary.

3. Membership

Membership of the SD Forum will be from across all 11 Councils, NILGA and Sustainable Northern Ireland.

- Each Council will be invited to nominate a SD Champion who will be their lead officer and be responsible for promoting the work of the SD Forum and sustainability within their Council.
- All Councils’ officers are entitled to participate in the SD Forum and may be chosen to represent their Council at particular meetings - particularly if

meetings are issue focused e.g. energy management, community development or economic growth.

- A mechanism for involving Elected Members in the work of the Forum and to seek their input will be identified.
- Other organisations may be asked to attend or support SD Forum meetings but will not be members.

4. Meetings

Meetings of the SD Forum will be quarterly, but will be supported by additional working group meetings (see clause 5).

- An annual meeting schedule will be agreed at the first meeting of the year.
- The SD Forum will be able to call additional meetings as necessary to quickly address emerging issues
- Meetings will be hosted by each of the Forum's members in turn, by voluntary arrangement

5. Working Groups

The SD Forum will have the capacity to establish working groups dealing with specific issues as they arise.

- Working groups will usually, but not exclusively, be time-bound and single issue focused.
- Membership of working groups will be agreed by the SD Forum members and a report on the activities of each Working Group given at each full SD Forum meeting.

6. Management

The SD Forum will be managed by Sustainable NI

- SNI will facilitate SD Forum Meetings and provide administrative support.
- SNI will provide technical support and expertise.
- A Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson for the SD Forum will be elected annually or as the need arises.
- A smaller management group will help to provide direction to the SD Forum. Membership of the management group will consist of the SD Forum Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, NILGA and Sustainable Northern Ireland.

7. Work Plan

The SD Forum will develop an annual work plan that will be used to ensure that the objectives and purpose of the SD Forum are met.

- The Management Group will support the SD Forum to develop a work plan.
- SNI will provide the technical support to Councils to help them implement the work plan and make it relevant within their own organisation.

8. Communication

Effective communication will be an essential element of the SD Forum and various forms of communication will be used to ensure that all Council officers have access to the information generated by the SD Forum.

- The SD Forum will be responsible for developing its own SD Communication Strategy.
- Capacity building of other Council officers, elected members and the wider public will be an integral element of the Communication Strategy.
- NILGA and SNI will be responsible for communicating the work of the SD Forum on their respective websites and social media outlets.
- SNI will provide the secretariat to the SD Forum and ensure that minutes, agendas and action plans are disseminated in a timely manner.
- All minutes and activities of the SD Forum will be available for the public record with the exception of those expressly embargoed.
- The SD Forum will not make public any information specifically related to an individual Council (eg any non-compliance issues) but will report only on the work of the SD Forum.
- Communication of good practice examples that refer to an individual Council's activities will seek approval from that Council prior to being published.

The Terms of Reference for the SD Forum will be reviewed annually by the Management Group.

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Signed: Jim Kitchen