



## **NILGA Policy Guidance Piece & Response (Draft): Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021**

### **(i) NILGA FULL MEMBERS & AGM (ii) FOR COUNCIL DISTRIBUTION**

**24<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

The following paper is written in response to the consultation on the draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-21. It has been compiled using the extensive consultation across the sector to develop a Programme for Local Government, and in liaison with NILGA Office Bearers & Executive, SOLACE, council Community Planning Officers, the Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership and Climate Northern Ireland, together with other professional officer groups.

**This is an evolving piece** and we look forward to engaging with councillors and council officers throughout the remainder of June and up to the 22<sup>nd</sup> July closing date, to ensure comments from across local government are fed into the final response document. NILGA is particularly keen to hear from councils on suggested revisions or additions to the Outcomes, Indicators and Measures detailed within the Consultation Document.

**For further information or to discuss any of the issues highlighted, please contact Karen Smyth at the NILGA Offices: Email: [k.smyth@nilga.org](mailto:k.smyth@nilga.org) Tel: 028 9079 8972**

**Derek McCallan  
Chief Executive**

**20<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-2021 (PfG) is presented at a time of both exciting opportunity and huge challenge for Northern Ireland. The new NI Assembly and the new councils together provide an environment which could enable the means to redesign the way we work, to break through silos, and to create a citizen centred, efficient, collaborative society that the citizens we serve will understand and readily support. We encourage the NI Executive to continue to be bold and innovative in its approach, and welcome the Framework as the first step in a much longer term strategic planning exercise.

NILGA broadly welcomes the iterative approach that the NI Executive is taking to the development of this overarching work, strategies and action plans that will eventually accompany the finalised Framework document. We acknowledge the need for a sea-change in how government – both central and local – delivers for our society, and we welcome the move to a more outcome-based approach, involving other sectors as key delivery partners. NILGA agrees that to ensure this new approach is successful, time will be required – and we look forward to working in partnership with the Executive to build robust and shared engagement, delivery and accountability mechanisms, and a shared and open approach to data collection and use.

NILGA urges the NI Executive to work with councils and with ourselves as the representative body for the sector, as key delivery partners. As stated, we have developed a Programme for **Local** Government (attached), designed to complement the PfG, which advocates co-design and co-delivery by councils. It is vitally important that the NI Executive fully considers the significant role that councils and local communities should have in the future success of Northern Ireland, and the specific ‘asks’ that the Programme for Local Government asserts are necessary to enhance council working over the next ten years.

We believe that by working together, we can maximise the effective use of the powers and financial instruments available to each sphere of government, enabling a *real* place-based approach to be taken to achieve the ‘whole system approach’ to which we all aspire.

The draft Framework document is indeed aspirational - which is to be welcomed - but lacks detail in some areas. Our comments, which we hope the Executive will view as constructive, are set out in the response below and NILGA asserts at the outset of its response that it will be essential to materially involve councils and the Association immediately after the response deadline, as befits the policy backdrop and ethos of this Framework, and in keeping with the representative, civic, and service delivery roles of local government in most contemporary democracies.

## **2.0 KEY ISSUES**

### **2.1 Local Government as Key Partner – the importance of alignment with Community Plans**

NILGA attests that the recent local government reforms - embedding a duty for locality based, inter-governmental community planning with councils - present a valuable opportunity for Northern Ireland as a whole.

Clear, empirical evidence from neighbouring jurisdictions shows that delivery of government priorities can best be delivered at local level, through multi-agency partnerships similar to those in the process of being established in Northern Ireland. Community planning provides a conduit for government departments to engage effectively at local level facilitated by their partners in local government.

Councils are working with their community planning partnerships to develop local sets of outcomes and indicators, and it is vital that all participants – central and local - are facilitated by district councils to

ensure that each local area is involved in informing and in contributing to achieving the agreed Northern Ireland outcomes, the necessary action plans, performance framework and local priorities which will form part of the overall 'jigsaw' of strategy for the foreseeable future.

NILGA and our member councils look forward to engaging with the Northern Ireland Executive to agree on delivery-focussed partnership working arrangements at local and Northern Ireland level, directly aligning community plans with the Framework and its resultant Strategies. In this regard NILGA considers it imperative that strong measures are put in place to ensure NI Executive and Departmental commitment to the 11 Community Plans in N.Ireland, ultimately adopting a Single Outcome Agreement approach.

## **2.2 Addressing Cross-Cutting Issues**

NILGA notes the intention to develop an action plan for each outcome. There is some risk that the result, with a very mechanistic work plan coming to fruition, will be the creation of new silos. This is NOT the manner in which important cross-cutting issues can be usefully considered, and as such NILGA asserts that new protocols will need to be established to determine greater budget, resource and related flexibility within the NI Executive's new departments. NILGA's work with sister LGAs and regional government in Scotland and Wales can be of assistance in this regard.

An important illustration of the need for such lithe government is the circular economy, which is mentioned only briefly in the information given on indicator 36 which deals with household recycling.

Other notable examples are community resilience and climate change, which are not mentioned in the document at all.

### **2.2.1 Circular Economy**

NILGA continues to promote the benefits of growing the circular economy in Northern Ireland, but views this as a strategic cross-cutting issue and of as much - if not even more - importance to the Department for Economy as it is to DAERA and to councils. NILGA has been working closely on this issue with council and government officials and has established that development of an effective cross-governmental, central-local approach to the circular economy will contribute to achieving the aims of the Programme for Government and will transform the way in which waste is managed by recognising and realising the true value of waste as a resource; with resultant increased income generated helping offset costs to local government. This type of approach should provide wider economic opportunities for the private and third sectors, by supporting innovation, job creation and increased profitability across the industry.

A cross-governmental approach to growing the circular economy would contribute to achieving six of the 14 identified outcomes of the draft PfG, i.e.:

- We prosper through a strong, competitive regionally balanced economy
- We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment
- We are an innovative creative society where people can fulfil their potential

- We have more people working in better jobs
- We have high quality public services
- We connect people and opportunities through our infrastructure

Work to achieve these outcomes could be measured in terms of contributing to 11 of the 42 identified PfG indicators. Only two of these 11 indicators are related to environmental sustainability and recycling, with the other nine linked to increased economic prosperity and employment.

The circular economy is just one example of a cross-cutting issue that might fall between the cracks of mechanistic action plans for individual outcomes; NILGA therefore requests that local government is given more detail and clarity on how action plans for cross-cutting central-local issues like this will be delivered, and that councils are materially included in such discussions.

### **2.2.2 Resilience**

Resilience is key to well-being, but is not visible enough in this draft PfG Framework. The Scottish Government defines community resilience as *“communities and individuals harnessing resources and expertise to help themselves prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies, in a way that complements the work of the emergency responders.”*

The importance of including a focus on ‘resilience’ was underlined when on 25 May 2016 Belfast was selected to join the Rockefeller Foundation’s 100 Resilient Cities programme, a powerful network of cities that includes New York, Tokyo, Barcelona, Bristol and London. This programme is providing Belfast with an exciting opportunity to think differently about the long term physical, economic and social shocks and stresses that face nations over the coming decades. Inclusion of resilience in the PfG will provide a focus of the lessons learned to be applied across all Government services.

Additionally, the clear importance of developing investment models supported by Government, across all of our towns and cities, as economic drivers, became clear at the World Towns Summit, in Edinburgh, in June 2016. It is essential that the PfG Framework develops ways in which resources and actions can be transferred to and deployed by local settlements of all sizes; underpinned by the outcomes of a task and finish exercise regarding constitutional devolution within NI, which NILGA considers to be essential during the first year of the Assembly’s mandate.

### **2.2.3 Climate Change**

By developing a systemic view of future planning and resilience, Northern Ireland can not only be prepared, but flourish in the years ahead, despite vulnerability to complex risks such as climate change. In Northern Ireland *‘Climate change will potentially have far reaching effects for all of us. It could affect our health and wellbeing; our homes; the accessibility of our road network; and the provision of services,*

such as, water and electricity supplies<sup>1</sup>. Northern Ireland is already experiencing increasing numbers of extreme weather events alongside less visible impacts of climate change, such as increased built environment maintenance costs and the mental health issues associated with flooding.

A very important part of planning the provision of public services is to ensure that they can continue to be provided during the physical, social and economic “shocks” that are a growing part of the 21st century. By embedding planning to deal with these shocks into our approach, Northern Ireland will be better placed to respond to future adverse events, and deliver essential public services in both good times and bad, to all parts of the community.

As with our public services, our infrastructure must be resilient to the extremes that climate change will increasingly expose it to, for example, our water, drainage and sewerage systems must be designed for excess, to absorb ‘shock’ that can come from extended wet or dry periods. Infrastructure does not necessarily mean hard engineering; where appropriate, green and blue infrastructure is a cost effective way of future proofing areas, whilst providing multiple benefits for society.

Climate change adaptation offers opportunity for Northern Ireland to stimulate creativity and innovation in the development of adaptation goods and services. In 2010-11, global climate change adaptation activities were worth an estimated £65.8 billion (goods and services were worth £2.1 billion, with over 21,000 employees in the UK with a forecasted UK growth rate of 7.1% by 2017-18).

Early investment in climate change adaptation is crucial. The eventual PfG must explicitly define innovative actions which will sustain future generations. With the potential economic and societal paybacks in mind, and acknowledging that 1 in 18 houses in NI is at risk of flooding, adaptation needs to be a priority in governmental change and new housing, coastal adaptation, land use and related infrastructure will be required to enable this, with some existing practices abolished.

### **2.3 Developing a clear way forward**

In consideration of the framework document, NILGA and council officers expressed concern in relation to the lack of detail on next steps, and *how* the aspirational outcomes are to be achieved. It was noted that all the outcomes aren’t ‘pure’ Outcome Based Accountability outcomes, and there was a lack of detail in relation as to how and why indicators were selected. NILGA is keen to establish how the indicators are going to be progressed in the absence of targets (although we understand the reasons for and support the non-inclusion of a large number of hard targets). We are also keen to establish what involvement councils will have in reporting on their contribution towards programmes, as direct correlation will often be difficult for councils to demonstrate. We would again highlight the case that local place-based working through community planning may make the council contribution more easily identifiable.

---

<sup>1</sup> Department of the environment (2014) Ministerial Statement: Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme. [www.doeni.gov.uk](http://www.doeni.gov.uk)

NILGA and our member councils are keen to work with government to develop the process for implementation of this framework and would ask to materially contribute to the drafting of the action plans and reporting arrangements.

#### **2.4 Towards a Regional Performance Framework**

NILGA anticipates that the finalised Programme for Government Framework document will eventually form part of a Performance Framework for Northern Ireland, similar to ‘Scotland Performs’, and we would strongly encourage the NI Executive to take this next step. An open and accountable performance framework can only increase public understanding of and confidence in how Northern Ireland is governed. There will be clear advantages for a framework of this nature to enable cross-referencing with council performance frameworks, tied into community plans, furthering shared accountability for delivery by all key partner sectors. A mechanism is required for ensuring programmes of work are successful and ideally, to begin to foster bottom-up delivery of real solutions designed in partnership with communities, as part of what is clearly a real opportunity to change the system for the better. An overarching, consistent Regional Performance Framework and related Protocols and Codes of Conduct, should be established during this Assembly Mandate as a matter of urgency, and should include local government, as part of the “normalisation” of the Public Service.

#### **2.5 Need for Review – ‘*permission to make mistakes*’**

It will be necessary for the outcomes and indicators emerging from the 11 community planning exercises to reflect the Programme for Government outcomes and indicators. As was demonstrated in the early days of similar changes to the Scottish System, optimum design may not be achieved at the start.

A review mechanism is built into the community planning process, and NILGA would strongly recommend to the Executive that they consider a similar mid-term review for the PfG, to correlate with community plan processes. This will enable an examination of whether the outcomes, indicators and measures are useful and ‘right’ for Northern Ireland. The review should be timed to allow for sufficient progress to have been made and to enable identification of areas which aren’t delivering the desired results. It is highly unlikely that we will get such a huge system change completely right first time – if the Framework, in its delivery, is to be as transformational as it purports - and local government is keen to work with the NI Executive and Departments to make any necessary ‘tweaks’ to the system as the need for these becomes apparent. We need to have a mutual understanding of what ‘good’ looks like, so that we don’t focus on things we can’t deliver. NILGA also asserts that a clear Results Against Targets piece is published and distributed, drawn from the Review, ensuring that citizens, not just politicians and public servants, can gauge progress and participate in change.

### **3.0 COMMENT ON OUTCOMES**

NILGA is broadly satisfied with the outcomes identified in the Framework, and is of the view that they provide sufficient flexibility to enable cross-referencing with the ongoing design of outcomes in the 11

council Community Plans. We particularly welcome that the first three outcomes are designed to cover the three pillars of sustainable development – economic, environmental and social; we look forward to working with the NI Executive to explore how Northern Ireland can contribute to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals to which the UK and Irish governments are committed.

NILGA notes that some outcomes directly reference local government, whilst others do not, and in this context asserts that local government, because of its unique role and constitution, is a key partner to achieve all Outcomes, as the Programme for **Local** Government (attached) illustrates.

NI councils have an important directive, supportive and collaborative role with the Executive to stimulate local-level innovation, R&D and creativity through enterprise learning and entrepreneurial skills development. The draft PfG is a means to link NI local councils and the Executive to grow our local business base and resilient, local employment.

We have a number of suggestions for alternative wording to ensure the inclusion of issues which we believe warrant insertion in the priority outcomes for Northern Ireland, as follows:

**Outcome 1: We prosper through a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy**

NILGA strongly supports the inclusion of this outcome, but would highlight the impact UK policy and legislation can have in this area.

For example, evidence from the Northern Ireland Strategic Migration Partnership engagement with NI employers shows that UK immigration regulations vis-a-vis employment of non-EU nationals is undermining Northern Ireland's competitiveness. Tier 2 regulations inhibit Northern Ireland employers from attracting and retaining the workforce they needs. Additionally, sector skills councils have highlighted the need for diverse staff with linguistic and cultural skills for successful expansion overseas.

**Outcome 2: We live and work sustainably – protecting the environment**

NILGA would wish to see this outcome strengthened by inserting the words 'and enhancing', i.e. "We live and work sustainably – protecting **and enhancing** the environment".

The explanatory text within the Framework Document should reference the importance of enhancing the environment and in particular the water environment, which is so fundamental to many aspects of health.

NILGA would be keen to see a further two bullet points under the 'Role of the Executive' heading, i.e.:

- Promoting a Circular Economy
- Ensuring compliance with statutory obligations

### **Outcome 3: We have a more equal society**

NILGA strongly supports inclusion of this outcome but would highlight that Northern Ireland needs more than equality monitoring, as attention needs to be on identifying where positive action is needed at national level as well as within organisations.

### **Outcome 4: We enjoy long healthy lives**

NILGA strongly supports this outcome, and notes in particular the identified role of the Executive in providing children with the best start in life, supporting parents in their role. We would highlight that the UK Immigration Act will have an impact on the ability of Northern Ireland to achieve this outcome, given the changes in support for children of refused asylum seekers.

### **Outcome 5: We are an innovative, creative society, where people can fulfil their potential**

NILGA welcomes outcome 5 and notes the link between the creation of a confident and innovative workforce/community, and the development of a cultural and societal 'permission' to make mistakes. There is a role for the Executive, for government departments and for councils to encourage the community and the workforce to be bold, less risk averse, and to encourage the media to be supportive of the drive to try new things.

NILGA would be keen to see a further bullet point under the 'Role of the Executive' heading, i.e.: "Promoting innovative use of resources, ensuring that government as a whole is entrepreneurial in its approach, for example within the circular economy."

### **Outcome 6: We have more people working in better jobs**

NILGA welcomes this Outcome, welcomes the reference to local government, and seeks that enterprise support agencies, large company private sector resources, small businesses and social economy bodies work with municipal entrepreneurs (councils) and government innovators, utilising existing (rather than creating new, resource sapping) bodies such as the NI Entrepreneurial Leadership Group (chaired by Minister Hamilton).

### **Outcome 6: We have more people working in better jobs**

NILGA would again note that attracting the best international talent to Northern Ireland will be made more difficult with the UK Tier 2 immigration rules - Northern Ireland employers find it difficult to compete with those in regions which can offer higher salaries.

### **Outcome 7: We have a safe community where we respect the law, and each other**

We ask that the PfG 2016-2012 Outcome 7 be modified by inserting the words 'and resilient', i.e. "We have a safe **and resilient** community where we respect the law, and each other.



NILGA is firmly of the view that community confidence happens at local level, and there is a fundamental role for councils and Policing and Community Safety Partnerships in contributing to achieving this outcome.

The NI crime survey can be used to track changes in confidence, but it would be helpful to incorporate the Racial Equality Strategy ethnic monitoring strand into the survey. The PCSP joint committee can provide guidance on how to monitor and assess progress in relation to migrant and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities.

**Outcome 9: We are a shared society that respects diversity**

NILGA would encourage the Executive to include 'nationality' in the list of aspects of identity in the supporting information for outcome 9, as this is not always included in information on ethnic group. We would also encourage the use of the same strong wording that is used for outcome 3, i.e. the Executive role should be "actively promoting" rather than "acknowledging" diversity.

**Outcome 10: We are a confident, welcoming, outward-looking society**

NILGA would again highlight for Outcome 10 and also for Outcome 12, the limitations posed for Northern Ireland by UK immigration legislation and policy, which we believe undermines these objectives, and makes it more difficult to build our place on the international stage. Serious consideration will need to be given by the NI Executive as to how it can respond to Westminster legislation on this and other areas. Some of the rules that are introduced in Westminster as primary legislation are relegated to secondary legislation in Northern Ireland, which limits the opportunity for robust devolved debate.

**Outcome 11: We have High Quality Public Services**

NILGA suggested that the PfG 2016-2021 Outcome 11 be modified by inserting the words 'and resilient', i.e. "We have high quality **and resilient** public services". We would therefore also propose that the NI Executive requires preparation of a Civil Contingencies Bill at an early stage within the 2016-2021 Assembly mandate.

**Outcome 12: We have created a place where people want to live and work, to visit and invest**

The explanatory text within the PfG should reference the importance of the role of the Executive in relation to:

- Reducing the risk of flooding
- Providing increased water and wastewater capacity to allow new connections

**Outcome 13: We connect people and opportunities through our infrastructure**

NILGA would be keen to see reference to waste infrastructure widened in the supporting text for this outcome, to include specific reference to infrastructure for recovery of energy from waste.

We would also suggest adding, as a further role for the Executive “Improve regional balance of economic prosperity in peripheral areas with low / limited GVA growth potential”.

#### **Outcome 14: We give our children and young people the best start in life**

NILGA would highlight that given the increasing percentage of our children who are from migrant and BME backgrounds, it is essential to ensure in the indicators for Outcome 14 that actions also meet their needs, particularly Indicator 12, which is a pressing issue for communities with a high number of migrants.

### **4.0 COMMENT ON INDICATORS**

There are some concerns within local government in relation to how the indicators identified in the Framework Document have been tested, and questions as to whether some are the right indicators, given the evidence already available to government through existing data collection systems. There is also concern in relation to the lack of ‘depth’ of indicators and the fact that use of secondary indicators has not been maximised. Again, we need to establish ‘what good looks like’, and there is some concern that there are no indicators related to issues on which Northern Ireland is currently performing well, leading to a less than rounded picture being painted.

Although the indicators are necessarily Northern Ireland wide, it is the view of local government that a (complementary) breakdown of these indicators by local government district will give a better picture of local priorities, emphasising the importance of read-across between council evidence bases, plans and performance management and that of the NI Executive. The breakdown of employment rate by council area given at indicator 34 is therefore welcomed. A more localised approach to the application of the policy direction established by the Framework Document should also ensure rural considerations are addressed, with councils and other sectors working in partnership with government departments, particularly DAERA. A two tier approach to driving local economies and the regional NI economy, as previously mentioned, would also contribute to a number of identified indicators of the draft PfG.

#### **4.1 Gaps identified in the list of indicators**

NILGA is concerned that a number of issues have not been included in the list of indicators, although it acknowledges that the list of indicators doesn’t become too unwieldy. Given the challenges faced by our society we would particularly like to see indicators strengthened / included relating to:

- Reduction of incidence of obesity
- Increased physical activity
- Adaptation to and mitigation of climate change
- Protection of built heritage and reduction in dereliction
- Continued Public Sector Reform and Private Sector / Social Economy Growth

Suggested wording for some of these are provided at 4.2 and 4.3 below.

#### **4.2 Suggested revisions to Indicators**

Indicator 20: NILGA would advocate an expansion to the wording of this indicator, to read “Increase the size of the economy **particularly through Private Sector and Third Sector growth**”.

#### **4.3 Suggested New Indicators**

Under Outcome 1: We suggest that local –level / regional productivity be measured (including GVA).

Under Outcome 2: There is potential for creation of a new indicator relating to the water environment, e.g. “% of water bodies assessed to be at the EU Water Framework Directive water quality status of good or higher”.

Under Outcome 3: The indicators listed for Outcome 3 don't adequately capture the intent of the outcome e.g. to 'actively promote benefits of a diverse society' and to 'support people who face serious issues as a result of harmful inequalities'.

Where possible, indicators should be disaggregated across S75 groups.

Under Outcome 3 & 9: We suggest that migrant population and migrant economic activity (labour market and SME) be measured.

Under Outcome 6: we suggest adding: “Increase the number of private sector and third sector employment proportionate to public sector jobs”

Under Outcome 11: We suggest creating a new indicator relating to resilience, e.g. “% of central and local government organisations that have a resilience strategy and action plan”.

Under Outcome 12: We suggest creating two new indicators relating to:

- Flooding, such as number of properties assessed to be within the extent of land at risk of flooded from the sea or due to pluvial or fluvial flooding
- The wastewater capacity, area of NI served by wastewater treatment works which have limited or zero capacity to allow new connections.

#### **5.0 COMMENT ON MEASURES**

NILGA is particularly encouraged by the acknowledgement within the document that there are some gaps in data collection systems, and the drive to develop innovative ‘indices’ on a number of issues. We would be keen to obtain information on these indices at an early stage, to ensure that councils can contribute usefully to the development of an overall Northern Ireland wide picture, particularly on the following:

- Good Jobs Index

- Respect Index
- Self-Efficacy – building on the work already done in the Belfast City Council area
- National Brand Index

### **5.1 Suggested Revisions to Indicator Measures**

NILGA asserts that, subsequent to 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2016, and prior to the formal consultations regarding the Economic, Social and Investment Strategies, an opportunity is created to enable local government as an absolutely key delivery partner to adapt and provide some depth to indicator measures, particularly where there is commonality (e.g. Education Indicators 11,12,13). Notwithstanding this, the following comments are offered in advance of 22<sup>nd</sup> July.

#### **Indicator 1: Reduce Crime**

NILGA is of the view that the measure detailed for Indicator 1 is problematic, in that prevalence rate – measuring the number of victims of any crime, is subject to high levels of variability. It is possible for one crime to affect thousands of people, which in our view would skew the overall picture. We would suggest that a better measure would be a measure of numbers of crimes occurring.

#### **Indicators 12-17**

NILGA asserts that these inter-dependent indicators need to explicitly reference the need for redesigning our Economic and Skills Development interventions, producing an Enterprise Menu which is less confusing, less grant aided, and less “inter agency competitive”, and include the provision of teaching entrepreneurial skills (using entrepreneurs themselves) linked to the curriculum as early as Primary School through to Third level College / University years.

#### **Indicator 18: Increase the proportion of people working in good jobs**

The suggested Good Jobs Index is problematic unless it is an independently verified Index with clear agreed, qualitative and quantifiable measures put in place, particularly in regard to affirming the need to proportionately increase private sector and social economy jobs in NI, dispersed throughout the 11 council areas, with “good” meaning more than salaries and high end jobs, since in many parts of NI a “good” job is one which enables work life balance, social and community cohesion, reduced travel to work, locality based, etcetera.

#### **Indicator 20: Increase the size of the Economy**

The lead measure is problematic unless there is an independently verified formula with clear agreed, qualitative and quantifiable measures put in place, particularly in regard to affirming the need to proportionately increase private sector and social economy jobs in NI, dispersed equitably throughout the 11 council areas as far as reasonably possible, and to set ambitious targets for enabling social economy, third sector and private sector bodies to deliver public sector contracts and services.

### **Indicator 22: Increase Innovation in our Economy**

We would question why the suggested measure for increasing innovation in the Northern Ireland economy is purely a comparative ranking with other UK regions. The rank of Northern Ireland within this system would be materially affected by the performance of other regions. Whilst it is no doubt beneficial to view the performance of Northern Ireland as it compares with some of our nearest competitors, ranking will not show our year on year improvement or otherwise on a stand-alone basis, and as such a NI target should be set which centres around NI being an innovation exemplar region and a world leader in Innovation by 2030. We expect NI to deliver gross value (GVA) growth of 1.3% in 2016, a small decrease on 2015 with the Northern Ireland remaining the poorest-performing of the 12 UK regions. This is well below expected overall UK growth of 2.05 in 2016, so NI needs to aim higher and perform substantially better.

### **Indicator 29: Increase Environmental Sustainability**

Although NILGA acknowledges the need to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, we would question why this is the sole measure in relation to increasing environmental sustainability

### **Indicator 31: Increase Shared Space**

It is suggested that a further measure is required under this indicator, to include S75 groups.

### **Indicator 32: Increase economic opportunities for our most deprived communities**

It is noted that the measure under this indicator identifies deprived communities by place only. Although some S75 groups are the subject of discrete indicators, this is not the case for BME groups.

### **Indicator 35: Increase Reconciliation**

It is unfortunate that the measure for this indicator reduces cultural identity to protestant and catholic. NILGA would encourage expansion of this measure, or without this expansion, would request more clarity in the description of the measure.

### **Indicator 36: Increase Household Recycling**

NILGA supports our member councils in the drive to increased household recycling levels, however we are of the view that this indicator and the measures supporting it require more attention. It will be vital, particularly on the basis of recent information made available by Strategic Investment Board that in addition to consideration of recycling, the NI Executive fully considers the impact of waste crime in Northern Ireland, and also the potential benefits to our society of the circular economy. NILGA would therefore strongly suggest that consideration be given to measures relating to a wider consideration of the waste hierarchy and the circular economy.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

NILGA is supportive of the aims, ethos and much of the content of the Framework Document, together with the aspirations detailed within.

NILGA believes that the Programme for Local Government appended is essential to strengthening democracy and sustaining NI's communities during the current and next NI Assembly mandate. As such we strongly assert that local government can actively contribute to the implementation and action required to make a positive impact towards achieving the identified outcomes for Northern Ireland, when finalised. This will require fiscal, governance and related contracts in keeping with contemporary two tier government elsewhere.

We very much view community planning as a positive mechanism for delivery locally, and given the statutory role of councils in facilitating community plans, we encourage the Executive Office and government departments to ensure councils are invited to co-produce the necessary action plans strategies, work programmes and performance arrangements emanating from this Framework, with the requisite resources devolved to councils to ensure high quality public services at affordable costs.

We look to Scotland as one of several key benchmarks, in particular the relationship between Scottish Government, COSLA and councils; the Scottish Improvement Service; recent legislation to enable a Community Empowerment Act (2015) and the Scotland Performs Round Table, and trust that central-local working will develop in a similar positive manner, over the current and next mandate in Northern Ireland.

NILGA believes that resources and competencies need to be developed within both tiers of government and as such, reaffirms the need for a Transformation Fund to enable delivery bodies and elected members to enhance their skills, which are now required to be cross cutting, are more complex, and radically different to the skills portfolio of even the recent past.

We look forward to see the results of this consultation and are ready, willing and able to engage with the NI Executive, Executive Office and government departments to discuss the development of appropriate governance for a joint, action-oriented approach.

### **Disclaimer**

*The Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) endeavours to ensure that the information contained within our Website, Policies and other communications is up to date and correct.*

*We do not, however, make any representation that the information will be accurate, current, complete, uninterrupted or error free or that any information or other material accessible from or related to NILGA is free of viruses or other harmful components.*

*NILGA accepts no responsibility for any erroneous information placed by or on behalf of any user or any loss by any person or user resulting from such information.*