



**NORTHERN IRELAND JOINT COUNCIL
FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES**

27 May 2011

To: Chief Executives of District Councils
Copy to: Members of the NIJC
Local Government Staff Commission for NI

Dear Chief Executive

CIRCULAR NIJC 06 - Issued May 2011
NORTHERN IRELAND JOINT COUNCIL FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES

JOINT SECRETARIES' STATEMENT
ON SINGLE STATUS IMPLEMENTATION

Dear Chief Executive

SINGLE STATUS IMPLEMENTATION

At a recent meeting of the Northern Ireland Joint Council Executive Committee the two Sides had a lengthy and detailed discussion on outstanding issues relating to the above and in particular the overall level of full completion of the process by councils in Northern Ireland.

Whilst most councils have either completed or largely completed the process, there remain a number where progress is either very slow or where local discussions have halted.

In respect of those councils where progress remains difficult, we thought that it would be of value to remind the parties at a local level of the importance of finalising implementation.

The 1997 Green Book agreement was a landmark agreement in the public sector. It acknowledged the importance in local government of application of the national agreement and frameworks and sought to deal decisively with the issues around equal pay and equal value via local implementation.

Councils, and indeed trade unions, need no reminding of the huge and almost inevitably negative impact of these matters becoming the subject of litigation rather than being resolved properly through local negotiation.

Those issues do not lessen or disappear, for example, because we have been planning for major local government reform and reorganisation. Questions in respect of equal pay would simply transfer with transferring employees and remain a potential problem for new authorities. Similarly, any situation where there was uncertainty around substantive gradings (e.g. because of outstanding job evaluation appeals) could cause avoidable uncertainty for both employers and postholders in managing staff transfers to new organisations.

The Northern Ireland Joint Council therefore strongly urges parties locally where final agreement and implementation is outstanding to re-double their efforts to bring these matters to a conclusion.

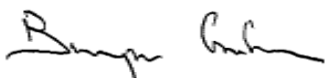
We would also draw attention to the mechanisms that are in place to support parties locally should discussions become difficult.

- (a) The National Joint Council issued a circular in August 2005 outlining an agreed form of 'Assisted Bargaining' where local negotiations became stuck. This remains available and the NIJC has agreed reference mechanisms to the Labour Relations Agency where appropriate.
- (b) It is at any time open to either or both parties locally to seek the assistance of the Northern Ireland Joint Council Joint Secretaries where it is felt that we may be able to support resolution of difficulties locally.

To date, all single status issues in Northern Ireland have been resolved through regional and local consultation and negotiation. However it appears inevitable that at some point matters may be referred to litigation should local agreements remain outstanding. That is not in the interest of councils, the trade unions or employees.

In conclusion, we would remind local parties that the 2004 Implementation Agreement places obligations on both parties locally. It required local employers to produce comprehensive proposals and requires both local parties to negotiate towards a settlement. We urge the full completion of these matters as quickly as is practicable.

Yours sincerely



BUMPER GRAHAM
Lead Trade Union Side Secretary



JOHN ADAMS
Employers' Side Secretary