



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Justice

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

**Update Briefing on the Revised Structures
of the DoJ Reform Programme**

2 February 2012

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Update Briefing on the Revised Structures of the DoJ Reform Programme

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Paul Givan (Chairperson)
Mr Raymond McCartney (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Sydney Anderson
Mr Stewart Dickson
Mr Seán Lynch
Ms Jennifer McCann
Mr Basil McCrea
Mr Alban Maginness
Mr Peter Weir

Witnesses:

Ms Kiera Lloyd	Department of Justice
Mr Mark McGuckin	Department of Justice

The Chairperson: I welcome Mark McGuckin, deputy director of the reform programme, and Kiera Lloyd from the reform programme. The Committee session will be reported by Hansard, and the transcript will be published on the Committee website. You can begin with your briefing, to be followed by members' questions.

Mr Mark McGuckin (Department of Justice): Thank you for your introduction and invitation to speak to the Committee. I will keep my comments brief, as the detail on the reform and restructuring programme is included in our paper to the Committee.

The Committee may recall from previous correspondence and briefing that the Department has been taking forward a reform programme that focuses on two broad areas: first, the structure and organisation of the Department, its agencies and arm's-length bodies; and, secondly, the arrangements for the delivery of corporate support services across the Department of Justice (DOJ) family. We have completed our work on the structure of the Department and have introduced a revised structure that we believe best meets our needs. We have attempted to create a structure where the various parts of the Department are linked together in a logical and coherent manner and where there is greater clarity of roles and responsibilities.

The structure is based on a number of core principles, key of which is that responsibility for setting strategic direction and development of policy should rest with the Minister and the core Department, leaving agencies and arm's-length bodies to develop a strong focus on service delivery.

The revised structure supports the Minister's mission of building a fair, just and safer community and is in line with the Minister's key priorities of faster, fairer justice; safer shared communities; and the reform of prisons and the youth justice system. The structure is based around three core directorates — access to justice, safer communities, justice delivery — as well as the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS).

Our paper focuses on the changes to the current structure with the creation of access to justice and the functions that have moved to create the safer communities directorate and the expansion of the existing justice delivery directorate. The creation of the access to justice directorate is probably the biggest change, as it involved bringing in functions previously carried out by an agency and an arm's-length body, and space had to be created to facilitate that. Policing and community safety issues were already closely linked, and the addition of reducing offending responsibilities led to the development of the safer communities directorate. Finally, some functions were moved into the justice delivery directorate to ensure that they received appropriate attention.

The new structure is shown in the diagram at the back of the paper; most of it came into effect in November last year. I am happy to answer any questions that the Committee might have on the revised structure or on our broader programme of work.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much. I want to ask a couple of quick questions; I do not intend to labour this part of the meeting. With regard to any rationalisation of back-office support or corporate functions, have you a figure in mind of the estimated numbers of staff who will no longer be necessary as a result of this? Have you any costings of how much that would save?

Mr McGuckin: There are more than a dozen projects looking at various aspects of corporate support services, ranging from finance, through HR to information technology and so on; they are being taken forward individually as part of the programme. They are all at different stages of development. The most advanced is the finance project in which we have examined the situation across the Department and its arm's-length bodies, and we are introducing a new finance system that will be implemented on a phased basis starting in July. It will mean that we will join the existing Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Account NI system, which is part of the shared services approach. A small number of staff savings flow from that project, and a limited cost saving is associated with it as well. Part of the issue in relation to the finance project is that some of our existing systems are obsolescent or obsolete and need to be replaced. Doing nothing was not an option. The cost of aligning with the NICS shared-service provider is significantly less than the next closest option available.

There are small levels of savings in the other projects. I can write to the Committee separately, if that would be useful, as we develop them. Some have identified projected savings, whereas others are not yet at that stage. With the HR project, for example, we needed to do a great deal of research into the different terms and conditions of service, and we will see where that takes us.

The Chairperson: I would be very interested to see whether there is any projected reduction in the number of staff as a result of those changes and what that will save. Historically in the civil service, the corporate service function has been duplicated unnecessarily in different arm's-length bodies and so on. There certainly is scope for such rationalisation.

Mr McGuckin: That is our focus. There will be a small reduction in the number of staff as a result of the finance project, and we expect that to be replicated across each of the other projects.

Mr McCartney: This is more about structure and organisation than policy roll-out or how and where policy will be decided.

Mr McGuckin: Absolutely. This is about aligning the various bits of the Department and taking account of them; for example, the integration of the Courts and Tribunals Service into the Department and removing areas where there is potential for duplication.

Mr McCartney: I want to ask about two broad aspects. Some matters are still reserved; how will that affect the Department as part of the restructuring?

Mr McGuckin: We did not look at all at reserved matters; we focused entirely on the existing responsibilities of the Department, its agencies and arm's-length bodies.

Mr McCartney: Last week, we had written document, and we will be receiving a presentation about British national security interests and their impact on the Prison Service. I am sure that there is such an impact on the work of the other structures. I wonder how that liaises and where the meeting point is.

Mr McGuckin: Those issues did not form part of the reform programme's work. Where such functions are being done, they continue to be done in their current areas. I am not au fait with precisely which functions you refer to.

Mr McCartney: I am just looking at this in the general sense; I am not referring to anything specifically. You are creating a new structure; where is the interface? I ask so that, in future, when we examine and scrutinise the structure, we will know where reserved matters impact upon the Department. Where do they sit and how are they scrutinising it?

Mr McGuckin: We did not look at that aspect as part of the reform programme. We took the Department's devolved functions, its agencies and its ALBs to see how best they were brigaded. If there is an interface in some of those policy areas, that will continue as is.

Mr McCartney: Therefore there will be no restructuring of that.

Mr McGuckin: No.

Mr McCartney: We heard that the vast majority of staff transferred from the former NIO to the DOJ. Are there still some staff who retain NIO status and conditions?

Mr McGuckin: I am not in a position to answer that; that strays into a personnel policy area, and we did not look at those. However, I think that there may well be. I think that we are coming to the end of that, although I am not qualified to answer.

Mr McCartney: It would be interesting to see what impact, if any, the roll-out of the new structure has on that issue. There may be no impact, but I am sure that you have heard the expression that some people still feel that there are elements of the DOJ that still have an NIO ring to them. I have heard some people — indeed some Committee members — refer to the DOJ as the "NIO in drag".

Mr A Maginness: Guilty, Chairman. *[Laughter.]*

Mr McCartney: I wonder how that impacts on your new structure.

Mr McGuckin: It does not impact on the new structure, but it impacts on the culture and identity of the Department. What we are trying to do as part of this process is to structure the Department in a way that is sensible and coherent and whereby people can clearly see where roles and responsibilities rest. The other side of that is to look at the culture of the Department and its associated bodies to create a common sense of purpose and of direction across the entire justice family. That will impact on the culture of the organisation in the future.

Mr McCartney: Finally, are civil service staff moving in and out of the Department? Is there any lessening or heightening of the vetting procedures?

Mr McGuckin: As I said, I am not qualified to answer that. It is not within my remit, but I am not aware of that happening.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much. If you could follow up on a couple of the points that were raised, that would be helpful.