

# INFORMATION LEAFLET

**Handling Significant Change  
Through Partnership**

**&**

**Agreement On Information And Consultation  
Arrangements Within The Local Authority Sector**

# **HANDLING SIGNIFICANT CHANGE THROUGH PARTNERSHIP**

## **What is the purpose of the document?**

The aim of this document is to help managers, trade union representatives and employees working through partnership in local authorities to handle significant changes with confidence. The document lists the types of issues that managers and trade union representatives have identified as being important to address through partnership in the interests of improving services to the public and the quality of working life of managers and employees. The document sets out a framework within which managers and union representatives may raise significant issues and agree on appropriate mechanisms for handling them. The document also sets out a number of supports that may be called on by the parties in the event that difficulties arise.

## **How are issues identified and advanced?**

Senior Management and Senior Union officials should meet with partnership representatives two or three times a year to:

- share information and identify priority issues and concerns
- decide whether an issue should be advanced through Partnership or the Industrial Relations mechanism, and in turn identify who should be involved in discussions
- review ongoing partnership issues

## **What type of significant issues can be addressed?**

The following is a sample of the categories of significant issues which have been suggested by management and union representatives

- Staff Welfare
- HR policies
- Health & Safety
- Organisational Performance
- PPP's
- Customer Service
- Training & Development
- Communications

## **What is the role of partnership?**

Two approaches have been identified for advancing issues through partnership

1. Joint Problem Solving: where there is broad agreement that a particular change is necessary and all parties work together to find the best solution
2. Interest Based Bargaining: where there is broad agreement that a particular change is necessary but various issues and interests need to be factored into a final solution

## **What is the relationship between partnership and IR when dealing with significant issues?**

Where part of a current issue is being advanced through the IR arena or where a totally separate issue, which could effect relations between the parties, is being advanced through the IR arena, the partnership committee should be kept informed of developments at all times.

## **How are difficulties and breakdowns handled?**

- Step 1: Services of local partnership facilitator should be utilised: ...if unsuccessful...
- Step 2: Issue to be referred to Senior Management / Union meeting: ...if unsuccessful...
- Step 3: Services of a third party facilitator should be utilised: ...if unsuccessful...
- Step 4: Issue to be referred to LANPAG

Partnership meetings should continue as normal while effort is being made to resolve any difficulties

## **How can links between Management Representatives and Senior Management Team (SMT) be strengthened?**

- Partnership should be on the agenda of all SMT meetings
- Regular reports to be provided by management reps to SMT
- Management Reps to advise SMT on current issues and seek input
- Full support for reps from SMT

## **How can links between Union Representatives and Union Structures be strengthened?**

- Partnership should be on the agenda of all union branch meetings
- Regular reports to be provided by union reps at branch meetings
- Minutes of partnership meetings to be circulated to all shop stewards and union officials
- Full support for reps from Union Officials

## **What is the role of the local Partnership Facilitator?**

Local Partnership Facilitators should:

- help design and manage the partnership process locally
- act as a source of knowledge regarding local and national developments
- promote partnership in the workplace

## **What is the role of LANPAG?**

LANPAG should:

- provide appropriate funding to help local authorities deal with significant issues
- provide support and guidance when necessary
- work closely with both the Management and Union side to promote the values and principles of the partnership approach

# **AGREEMENT ON INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS WITHIN THE LOCAL AUTHORITY SECTOR**

It is good practise for your employer to let you know what is going on in the business and about any planned future changes. There are now legal rights for your employer to consult you.

Following on from a 2002 EU Directive the “Employees (Provision of Information and Consultation) Act 2006” was passed into Irish Law in 2006. Based on this act, LANPAG agreed arrangements which set out the ways in which information sharing and consultation will be carried out within the Local Government sector.

## **What is the purpose of the agreement?**

The purpose of the agreement is to provide an information and consultation framework within which local authorities may fulfil their obligations under the Act.

The agreement sets out approaches necessary to:

- ensure employees receive the information to which they are entitled;
- provide information to enable involvement of staff in change processes; implement arrangements that enable information and consultation to improve decision-making and organisational performance.

Appendix 1 sets out the principles of a good practise approach to information and consultation.

## **How will information sharing and consultation take place?**

“Handling Significant Change Through Partnership” recognises that the partnership process will ensure effective information and consultation occurs as follows:

- information will be provided to employees on recent and probable developments within each local authority in relation to its activities and economic situation - for example, an expansion, change of business direction or anticipated financial constraints within the local authority;
- to inform and consult on the situation, structure and probable development of employment within the local authority and any anticipatory measure envisaged, in particular where there is a threat to employment;
- to inform and consult on decisions likely to lead to substantial changes in work organisation or in contractual relations, including those covered by the Community
- provisions referred to in Article 9 of the Directive (collective redundancies and transfer of undertakings).

“**consultation**” means “the exchange of views and establishment of dialogue between the employees’ representatives and the employer”; and

“**information**” means the “transmission by the employer to the employees’ representatives of data in order to enable them to acquaint themselves with the subject matter and to examine it.”

The exchange of views implicit in consultation is expected to take place at all stages during the implementation of change. Consultation will occur with a view to reaching an agreement on decisions within the scope of the management’s power. It is not necessary that agreement actually be reached but all parties will endeavour to ensure that the consultations are genuine and undertaken with the intention of reaching agreement.

Every effort will be made by all the parties to prevent disagreements or resolve any disagreements at the earliest opportunity and as quickly as possible using, where appropriate, the facilities available through agreed partnership and industrial relations processes.

Consultation shall not occur where management believe that such consultation would seriously damage the local authority or where it has to comply immediately with an order issued to it by a regulatory or supervisory body. However all employees will be informed of such decisions at the earliest possible opportunity.

### **Who should be involved in the Information & Consultation process?**

Consultation with employees shall be through representatives nominated to LANPAG and to the partnership committees within each local authority. Employee representatives will undertake to include all staff in the relevant information and consultation process. However this does not preclude management from directly consulting staff through mechanisms agreed within the partnership arrangements. See Appendix 2.

### **At what stage should consultation commence?**

Adequate time is required to allow for full information sharing and consultation, before final decisions are taken and change implementation processes commence. Every effort should be made to exchange information and enter consultation at the earliest possible opportunity, in order to ensure that no undue delays occur with implementing any changes required.

### **What is the procedure for consultation?**

The arrangements and conduct of meetings will be consistent with the current arrangements for Partnership meetings.

- Subject to confidentiality restrictions, (*Any employee representative, employee participant or expert providing assistance is not authorised to reveal to employees or third parties any information which, in the legitimate interest of the local authority, has been expressly provided to him/her in confidence*) employee representatives will report back within the partnership structures to the employees concerned about the content of the meetings held.
- Where necessary, management will provide expert advice to assist in the information and consultation process.
- Management and employees' representatives shall work in a spirit of co-operation and where appropriate, partnership facilitators will be utilised to foster co-operation between management and employees' representatives.
- The parties are committed to ensuring that delays do not occur in implementing change due to any perceptions of consultation as an endless process without decisions being made and implemented.
- Where the parties agree on a particular course of action, all parties will commit fully to the pursuit and full implementation of any such courses of action.

### **How will disputes be resolved and what is the relationship with IR?**

Disputes between management and employees' representatives will be referred to LANPAG for determination. Should LANPAG not be in a position to resolve the dispute it may be referred to by management or the employee representative(s) to the Labour Court for determination.

While it is expected that well implemented information and consultation procedures should support and strengthen existing IR processes, the existing processes and structures for addressing collective bargaining issues remain unaltered by the Directive and the Act, and as agreed within the protocol Handling Significant Change Through Partnership.

## Appendix 1

### Principles of a good practice approach to information and consultation

- Recognise that the key to more effective informing and consulting lies not so much in the bundle of practices that are adopted as in the context, manner and spirit in which they are introduced and progressed.
- Foster a culture of information sharing, joint problem solving and consultation in the organisation. Identify ‘champions’ who will advocate this approach. Ensure that all managers in the organisation have the necessary skills to inform and consult with employees and their representatives
- Ensure that employee representatives have the skills necessary to engage in information and consultation activities on behalf of the organisation’s staff.
- Ensure that information and consultation arrangements are built on existing practices, not in addition to them, and that the arrangements are aligned with the objectives of the organisation’s HR and industrial relations approaches [and as agreed within LANPAG].
- Align information and consultation activities with the organisation’s strategy and business plan.
- Understand that information and consultation arrangements evolve as trust grows, and allow room for experimentation and innovation.
- Adhere to the spirit of the Directive, which is to ensure employees receive the information to which they are entitled, and to implement arrangements that enable information and consultation to improve decision-making and organisational performance.
- Recognise that there is no one model of good practice and that the key is to develop and customise practical arrangements that meet the needs and culture of the organisation and its employees.
- Adopt benchmarks of good practice when developing an information and consultation strategy. This will assist the organisation to measure the impact of information & consultation on its performance and profitability.
- Approach the implementation of the Directive with a commitment to openness and transparency.
- Be mindful of the need for confidentiality in today’s competitive environment.

## Appendix 2

Direct and Indirect

### Direct information sharing

#### *Written Methods*

- Company handbook
- Employee handbook
- Organisational newsletter
- Employee briefings
- Bulletin boards
- Notice boards
- Memos and information notices
- Annual Reports
- Staff circulars
- Quarterly business updates

#### *Electronic Methods*

- Email
- Audio-conferencing (telephone)
- Web-based conferencing
- Video conferencing
- Intranet / Internet postings
- Databases
- Web casts

#### *Face-to-face methods*

- Employee briefings- individuals
- Team briefings- team, business unit, department
- Large scale staff meeting - interdepartmental, organisational wide
- Breakfast briefings
- Working lunches
- Management chain briefings
- Information cascades
- Shop floor briefings

### Direct Consultation

#### *Individual consultation*

- Performance Reviews
- Training & Development Reviews
- Employee appraisal / 360- degree systems
- One-to-one meetings
- Employee surveys / attitude surveys
- Suggestion boxes

#### *Group consultation*

- Temporary Groups - time limited and issue specific i.e. partnership working groups, project groups, task forces or focus groups
- Permanent Groups - e.g. Partnership committees , or others that discuss work related
- issues on an on-going basis

#### *Indirect information*

- Industrial Relations Structures and Agreements
- Partnership-style arrangements
- European Works Councils
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Collective Redundancies
- Mergers and Acquisitions
- Pension Trustees

#### *Indirect consultation*

- Industrial Relations Structures and Agreements
- Partnership-style arrangements
- European Works Councils
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Collective Redundancies



**Local  
Authority  
National  
Partnership  
Advisory  
Group**

*This leaflet has been compiled by Partnership Facilitators for the information of employees*

*The full “Handling Significant Change Through Partnership” and “Agreement on Information and Consultation Arrangements within the Local Government Sector” documents can be viewed on the Council’s intranet site or copies can be obtained from your local Partnership Facilitator*