2017-18 KESS Annual Programme – “Hot Topics List”

Working in partnership with its Assembly colleagues, the Research and Information Service compiled the below list of topics that are expected to be relevance to governance in Northern Ireland (NI). This “Hot Topics List” is stated in no particular order of significance. It aims to help inform the 2017-18 Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS) Programme, which is planned to run from October 2017 - June 2018. The Programme is to include 20 seminars; each covering up to 4 themes under a broad heading. It will aim to promote evidence-based policy and law making in NI.

1. Finance

- Public expenditure management models
  - Budgeting models, e.g. outcomes-based budgeting such as in relation to gender, children, human rights or other
  - Preventative Expenditure

- Charging for public services

- Impact of departmental budget cuts on delivery of public services (including third sector)
  - Section 75 groups
  - Health
  - Education
  - Higher and Further Education
  - Environment

- Potential impact of Brexit in terms of
  - European Union (EU) funding gap following Brexit on, e.g.
    - Economy
    - Higher education institutions
    - Research and development
    - Agriculture
    - European Investment, e.g. Investment Fund
Alternate Forms of Available Public Finance
- Financial Transactions Capital
- Borrowing
- Sale of public assets

Financial Arrangements under Devolution
- Barnett formula and viable alternatives
- Potential financial implications of “English Votes for English Laws” (EVEL) for the regions, e.g. NI block grant implications
- Executive’s use of its fiscal levers, including existing and future taxes (e.g. Corporation Tax), duties (e.g. Air Passenger Duty), levies, charges (e.g. water charging) and rates
- Models to inform the development and implementation of an Independent Fiscal Council in NI, e.g. relevant lessons from Scotland and Wales

Revenue
- Tax avoidance and tax evasion

Public Procurement
- Use of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and or social economy enterprises (SEEs) in public procurement
- Effectiveness of social/community clauses in public procurement contracts, e.g., in delivering social benefits or advancing the Executive’s social policy priorities
- Impact of budget constraints on public procurement and the construction industry
- Potential impact of Brexit on public procurement, e.g. any potential additional freedom to pursue social/environmental objectives through procurement

2. Governance

Potential impact of Brexit in terms of political implications for NI

Public Sector Reform in NI
- Models to promote sustainability and collaboration in public service delivery (including the third sector) both within NI and cross-border, e.g., in the areas of health, social care, waste collection, infrastructure, environment, etc.

Local Government
- Promotion of well-being by local government
- Implementation of local government reform in NI
  - Relevant lessons from Great Britain (GB) about local government reform implementation
    - Local level planning
    - Service delivery at the local level, e.g. performance improvement

Women in public life

3. Agriculture

Farm safety

Rural proofing

Supply chain issues and farm gate prices

Sustainability of farm income
• Potential impact of Brexit on agriculture in terms of
  o NI and cross-border
  o Post-Brexit GB and NI agri-policy, including use of either direct payments or indirect support for farmers

4. Fisheries

• Potential impact of Brexit on NI fisheries in terms of
  o NI and cross-border
  o Post-Brexit GB and NI fisheries policy given international fisheries stock management requirements and scientific advice, what are the potential pros and cons of expanding both the range of species and volumes when landing fish

5. Environment

• Pollution, e.g. air pollution
• Climate Change, e.g. pros and cons of legislating to encourage change
• Strategic Planning, e.g. flood risk and coastal management
• Marine Planning and Protection, e.g. managing competing interests – economic versus conservation
• Sustainable Development in the countryside
• Plant Disease and Invasive Species
• Waste Management and Disposal, e.g. enforcement and governance, resource efficiency/circular economy
• Potential impact of Brexit on environment (terrestrial and marine) in terms of NI and cross-border

6. Energy

• Economic impact of developing an energy economy in terms of, e.g., jobs, business growth and supply chains
• Economic, environmental and social impacts of developing renewables beyond NI's 2020 targets versus unconventional resource and the impact of developing both

• Electricity
  o Electricity Market Reform (EMR)
  o Security of supply
  o Grid connections
  o Research and development

• Renewable Energy
  o Small scale wind generation
7. Regional Development

- Renewables
  - Renewable heat incentives
  - Smart metering
  - Price controls and consumers

- Potential impact of Brexit on energy in terms of NI and cross-border

- Water and sewerage
  - Funding infrastructure investment to address, e.g. flooding
  - Domestic water charging

- Rail Services
  - Health and safety provision
  - Timetabling

- Integrated Transport
  - Equality in transport service delivery
  - Delivering sustainable transport solutions in times of austerity
    - Models to promote transport infrastructure investment to support growth and competitiveness

- Potential impact of Brexit on regional development in terms of NI and cross-border

8. Economy, Enterprise, Business, Trade and Investment

- Economy
  - NI Executive Economic Strategy
  - Models to increase productivity in NI and promote economic development regionally and sub-regionally
  - Potential impact of Brexit on the economy in terms of, e.g., NI and cross-border

- Business/enterprise
  - Models to promote enterprise, e.g., private funding initiatives such as “Angel Funding”
  - Effectiveness of the Executive’s enterprise policy in promoting innovative collaboration between business and universities
    - Developing university “spin-out” companies and business/university collaboration, to encourage innovation capacity
    - Potential impact of Brexit on enterprise in terms of NI and cross-border

- Trade and Investment
  - Models to promote private sector investment, e.g., in town centres
  - Global value chains
  - Exports
  - Potential impact of Brexit on trade and investment in terms of NI and cross-border

- Tourism
  - NI Tourism Strategy
  - Models for promoting tourism
  - Potential impact of Brexit on tourism in terms of NI and cross-border
9. Employment

- Careers and Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)
  - Targeting groups, such as school age pupils, young people, unemployed, those living in rural areas, those in urban, etc.

- Youth Unemployment
  - Young people “Not in Education, Employment or Training” (NEETS)

- Economic Inactivity
  - Strategically tackling economic inactivity, to reduce welfare benefit costs and social exclusion levels
  - Impact of reduced third sector (community/voluntary sectors) funding

- Implications of the National Living Wage for employers and employees/workers

- Zero Hours Contracts (ZHCs)
  - Impact of ZHCs' use on business and the individual employee

- Gender inequality in the workplace, e.g. gender pay gap

- Skills deficit

- Apprenticeships
  - Models to improve alignment of apprenticeships with business needs

- Employment agencies

- Potential impact of Brexit on employment in terms NI and cross-border

10. Higher and Further Education

- Impact of reduced funding in third level education, e.g. implications for the universities, individual students, business, industry and other

- Student loans

- Educational Maintenance Allowance

- Support for people with learning disabilities

- “Fit for purpose” graduates
  - Teaching entrepreneurship in universities

- Potential impact of Brexit on NI’s Higher and Further Education

11. Education

- Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disability
  - Implementation of changes
  - Passing subordinate legislation and the potential impact on statements, transfer of some rights from parents to children over compulsory school age
  - Adequacy of budgetary provision to schools

- Anti-Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy
Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS)

- Revised Curriculum
- Shared and Integrated Education
- Education Governance
- School Rationalisation/ Small School Sustainability
- Early Years/Intervention
  - Sure Start
  - Signature Nurture Units
  - Other Delivering Social Change early intervention programmes
  - Literacy and Numeracy Projects
  - Targeting children’s services
  - Pre-school provision – for example, extent and quality of provision
- Promotion of females in STEM subjects (“Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths”)
- Children and Young People’s Strategy
- Childcare Strategy
- Education of young people in custody
- Looked after children
- Promotion of STEAM subjects (“Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths”)
  - Use of innovative digital gaming and social networking

12. Culture and Arts

- Multi-purpose use of libraries
  - Library strategy during periods of funding challenges
- Creative Industries
  - Maximising the potential of their economic benefit
  - Effective delivery support mechanisms
  - Closing the skills gap
- Initiatives to enable shift in policy from STEM (“Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths”) to STEAM (“Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths”)
- Minority language strategies
  - Effectiveness of such governmental strategies in NI and elsewhere, e.g. European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, French and indigenous languages in Canada, New Zealand
  - Costing above strategies
- Broadcasting, e.g. regional representation
- Heritage and museums
  - Degree of collaboration between museums policy and the historic environment
Potential impact of Brexit on heritage and museums in NI, e.g. the historic environment with potential loss of agri-environment schemes
- Heritage crime, including range, extent and counter-measures
- Public engagement in heritage, including engagement with marginalised groups

Inclusion in the arts
- Working in partnership with local councils and key stakeholders
- Costs of engaging in different art forms
- Removal of barriers, e.g. financial, economic, educational and information-related
- Location of venues in areas of multiple deprivation
- Ethos of cultural institutions and arts venues
- Health and well-being benefits

13. Sport

Physical activity and child development
- Child participation in physical activity compared with elsewhere in the UK
- Longer-term social and economic implications of NI children’s low sport participation
- Models of interventions or programmes aimed at effectively tackling barriers to physical activity, particularly for children at post-primary level

Gender imbalance in physical activity levels

Cycling
- Cycling policy
  - Models to encourage cycling instead of driving
- Track cycling
  - Models for outdoor and indoor velodromes

Sport to enhance the lives of people with disabilities
- Models for emergency exiting plans and their impact on stadium capacity

Sports tourism
- Economic potential of sports tourism on the island of Ireland
- Effectiveness of NI governmental policy and strategic planning to encourage sports tourism
- Models of good practice in strategic planning to promote sports tourism
- Potential impact of Brexit on sports tourism in terms of NI and cross-border

14. Communities

Third sector
- Implications of funding cuts, e.g. on service provision

Homelessness

Community Regeneration

Regulation of the Private Rented Sector

Social Housing

Sustainable Housing Supply
• Fuel Poverty

• Universal Basic Income

• Improving outcomes for those in or leaving care

• Welfare Reform
  o Mitigation Measures
  o Impact of welfare reform in NI

15. Health

• Health and Social Care Reform
  o Continued reform of service delivery, governance and management of primary and community care, secondary care – whole system transformation
  o Improving patient outcomes
  o Delivering better value services
  o Moving forward from “Transforming Your Care” – way forward as outlined in Bengoa Expert Panel Report (“Systems not structures”) and Departmental Strategy (“Health and Wellbeing 2026”), key drivers, challenges and issues, including:
    ▪ Health Inequalities
    ▪ Needs of ageing population
    ▪ Healthcare workforce – reconfiguration and workforce planning
    ▪ Organisational and delivery models
    ▪ Elective Care Plan to tackle waiting lists
    ▪ Future model of primary care – multidisciplinary primary care teams (including Allied Health Care Professionals), access to out-of-hours, community pharmacy etc
    ▪ Co-production of services
    ▪ Lessons learned from management of TYC – see NIAO report “Management of the TYC Reform Project
  o Reform of adult social carer and support
    ▪ Models of care, support for carers, long-term sustainability

• Sustainability and collaboration across health and social care
  o Good practice and innovation used in health and or social care to promote sustainability of services and collaboration in public service delivery (including the third sector) both within NI, cross-border and all-island service delivery (e.g. context of rare diseases) in the context of full system and service delivery reform across health and social care

• Health inequalities and public health
  o Good practice in tackling health inequality gaps between the most and least deprived areas of NI, across a range of recognised indicators, such as alcohol, smoking (including tobacco controls and e-cigarettes) and drugs (including legal highs); pregnancy and early years; diet (including obesity) and dental health; major diseases; premature mortality; major diseases (cancer, circulatory, respiratory); chronic illnesses

• Mental health and illness
  o Mental well-being
    o Approaches undertaken to promote and measure well-being in society in different age groups
    o Parity with physical health – concept and methods to achieve
Access to diagnosis and treatment for mental illness – ‘recovery’ focus and co-production of services – good practice and development, involvement of voluntary and community sector

Tackling the recognised key barrier – Stigma

Mental capacity – implementation of Mental Capacity Act – development of Code of Practice, development of capacity assessment, staff training etc

Understanding and Prevention of self-harm and suicide, across gender and age groups, good practice in service delivery

Specialist areas such as perinatal mental health and eating disorders

Growing evidence of early intervention through schools programmes – collaboration with education sector and curriculum development

Health Care Analytics, including use of data to improve service delivery and patient outcomes, such as growing use of telemedicine, e-health, healthcare sensors and devices that generate streams of data, privacy and security of patient data including secondary use of health care data, investigating the limits of what healthcare analytics can accomplish with traditional health care databases and the growing interest in “Big Data”

16. Land and Property

Land Law Reform
  o Management of public spaces on private housing estates/in multi-unit dwellings

17. Equality and Human Rights

Bill of Rights for NI

Immigration and Asylum
  o Implementation of the Immigration Act 2016
  o Appeal rights exhausted by Asylum-Seekers
  o Economic Migrants, Refugees and Asylum-Seekers
    ▪ Relocation implications, e.g. social, economic and political
    ▪ Integration Strategy
    ▪ Potential impact of Brexit on each specified group

Building a united community
  o Sectarianism, racism and community cohesion
    ▪ Involving communities and other groups, e.g. young people in decision-making

Historical abuse
  o Redress for Victims and Survivors, e.g. clerical abuse and mother/baby homes

Dealing with the past

Political representation of women

Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender (LGBT) rights

Age discrimination in relation to the provision of goods, facilities and services

Disability
  o Disability discrimination
  o Independent living
Mental capacity
Welfare Reform

Potential impact of Brexit on equality and human rights in NI

18. Justice

Inquests, Public Inquiries and Coronal Law

Civil and Family Justice Law Review

Prison Reform
- Drug misuse in prisons
- Staff and prisoner safety, including adequate staffing levels
- Reform of women’s prisons
- Mental health and care
- Healthcare provision
- Learning and skill development opportunities

Rehabilitative work with ex-prisoners
- Implications of funding reductions for third sector working

On-line behaviour and offences
- Improving on-line protection for children and young people
- Disclosing private sexual photographs and images, e.g. ‘revenge porn’ on social media

Mental Capacity
- Advanced decision-making in civil law

Youth Justice System reform

Legal Aid reform
- Budgetary implications
- Access to justice implications
- Alternative methods to fund money damage claims
- Remuneration and appointment of expert witnesses and or legal representatives

Fines and Enforcement
- Good practice in other jurisdictions to highlight alternatives to prosecution, e.g. supervised activity orders/community service
- Television licensing

Bail, e.g. codifying NI bail law

Victims
- Potential impact of Brexit given recent implementation of the Victim’s Directive

Witnesses of crimes

Rural crime

Crimes against older people

Reducing reoffending
- Implementing problem solving courts
- Developing non-judicial remedies
- Sexual crime
  - Lack of coordination in compilation of sexual crime data
- Potential impact of Brexit on justice in NI, e.g., in term of equality and human rights

19. Statistics

- Use of longitudinal databases and other available data to provide information and analysis on:
  - Welfare Reform implications
  - Social Mobility
    - Labour market transitions relevant to: female career mobility; youth entry; delayed exits; the economically inactive; and, NEETS (“Not in Education, Employment or Training”)
  - Distribution of public services across all societal sectors
  - Differential outcomes in:
    - Health
    - Education
    - Higher and Further Education
    - Employment
    - Other