



**Public Accounts Committee**

**2009 and 2010 Annual Reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General  
Skill Programme and Partnership Arrangements in the Health Service**

**Opening Statement by Geraldine Tallon, Accounting Officer  
Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government**

**15 December 2011**

Chairman, Members of the Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to make a brief opening statement in regard to the matters to be considered by the Committee this morning.

In the course of the Committee's consideration of the Skill Programme, and partnership arrangements in the Health Service, there has been reference to the local government sector national partnership advisory group – LANPAG. The Skill Programme did not run in, or receive funds from, local government.

I briefed the Committee of the 30<sup>th</sup> Dail on 28 October 2010 in regard to the partnership arrangements in the local government sector. As requested, I have recently provided an updated briefing paper outlining the background to the establishment of LANPAG, its funding, the funding provided to SIPTU for training of trade union representatives in areas related to the partnership process, and the current position in regard to the funds in question. LANPAG is based in, and supported by, the Local Government Management Agency. It has been funded annually through an allocation from the Local Government Fund and its accounts are audited by the Local Government Audit Service.

The SIPTU National Trustees Sub-Committee Report of March 2011 acknowledged that supporting documentation had not been provided for €200,000 of the €789,000 provided by LANPAG to the SIPTU National Health and Local Authority Levy Fund Account.

The Department, last year, requested LANPAG to obtain reimbursement of the €200,000 from SIPTU, in the absence of documentation to show that the funding was utilised for training, and in the meantime to take steps to return €200,000 to the Local Government Fund. LANPAG returned this sum to the Local Government Fund in March 2011. It was subsequently agreed that the remaining balance, of some €697,000 in the SIPTU Levy Fund, should be refunded to the Exchequer.

Over half the overall funding of €37.7 million allocated to LANPAG over the period 1999-2009 was paid in subvention to local authorities in respect of the salaries of Partnership Facilitators and the operation of Partnership Committees. Almost a quarter (€9 million) was utilised in annual funding to support local authority partnership projects, and some 10% (€4 million) supported the Return to Learning Initiative, which focused primarily on education for outdoor workers and general operatives. The costs of three foreign study trips were also met by LANPAG directly over the period.

LANPAG has not received any additional funding in 2010 or 2011, and its partnership, educational and training activities have been supported from existing unspent allocations. The agreed funding for such purposes in 2011 is some €388,000.