



Attending the official signing of the Member Development Charter are (from left) Councillor Jim Speers (Mayor of Armagh and City District Council), Alderman Stephen Moutray MLA (Mayor of Craigavon Borough Council) and Councillor Patrick McAleenan from Banbridge District Council (who was standing in Council Chairman Councillor Jim McElroy).

## Cluster Council opts for Development Charter

SIXTY-FIVE councillors from Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon will be better placed to serve their local communities after working through the NI Elected Member Development Charter.

The Member Development Charter is designed specifically for the development of councillors and represents best practice from across the country. It is being driven by Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) and councils had to submit an application to be considered for this nationally recognised accreditation.

Given the strong collaboration Armagh City and District, Banbridge District and Craigavon Borough, members were keen to continue to prepare for the amalgamation.

When joined the cluster council will have a population of over 185,212, 65 members and cover an area totalling 181,818 hectares.

There are five key stages to the charter which will take four years to achieve including start up, doing the work through identified action plans, assessment, achievement of the charter itself and then re-assessment.

There are six core skills covered including local leadership, partnership working, communication, political understanding, scrutiny and challenge and regulating and monitoring.

Banbridge Councillor Patrick McAleenan comments: "The role of local councillors

and the expectations of them have changed dramatically. Councillors now have to be aware of local and European legislation, they have to be much more accountable, member development is essential if local government is to thrive and prosper."

It will cost each individual council £250 with NILGA funding the rest of the costs. The programme will be delivered by South East Employers (SEE) and when completed will have a major positive impact on the development of councillors and ultimately the improvement of our cluster's delivery of services.