



Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Report to:	Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Overview of Key Decisions to be made in preparation for new Council
Date:	19 December 2014
Reporting Officer:	Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive
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1.0 Background

- 1.1** As Members will be aware the Council's Shadow period will come to an end on March 31st 2015 by which time we must be in a position to deliver our services within the extended boundary as well as the new functions transferring from central government. In order to do this the District Rate must be agreed by 15th February 2015 and new political decision making processes need to be ready for the AGM at the end of March 2015. The Council is also required to produce a corporate plan, which will be informed by the ongoing work on the Belfast Agenda, setting out the priorities for the city.
- 1.2** A number of decisions will be required to be made in advance on key issues including the revenue estimates, the capital / physical investment programme, the council's constitution, scheme of delegation, positions of responsibility and terms of reference for the new committees. Proposals will also be brought to committee on the future of the area working groups in particular the geographies and their potential role in line with community planning. Members will also have to agree the priorities for the Council in its first year of operation and will be asked to consider decisions in relation to the impact of providing services in the new areas and the costs associated with this.
- 1.3** It is also anticipated that ongoing guidance and legislation will be produced by the DoE for consultation on the implementation of various aspects of the local government act including community planning, performance improvement, positions of responsibility etc. which the committee will also have to consider.
- 1.4** This paper provides Members with an initial overview of the key decision making points between January and March 2015. Given the volume and level of detail that these decisions will require ongoing Party Group briefings, meetings of party group leaders and budget panel to allow further discussion

2.0	Key Decisions Required
2.1	<p data-bbox="199 286 1497 414">Political Management Arrangements – During November detailed discussions were held with the party groups on possible committee structures and how they should be constituted and the SSP&R committee agreed the following:</p> <ol data-bbox="247 414 1497 828" style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The adoption of five standing committees; Strategic Policy and Resources, Place and Growth, People and Communities, Planning and Licensing. 2. Four committees; Strategic Policy and Resources, Place and Growth, People and Communities and Licensing, shall each comprise 20 Members 3. The Planning committee will have 14 Members 4. The establishment of an Audit and Risk Panel 5. The Quota Greatest Remainder method of appointing councillors to committees (to be confirmed at the AGM) 6. D'Hondt as the method for selecting positions of responsibility <p data-bbox="108 884 654 918">2.1.2 <u>Supporting documents and processes</u></p> <p data-bbox="199 929 1497 1198">As highlighted to the committee further decisions will have to be made in relation to the key supporting documents and processes to enable the committees and decision making process to work. The key documents are Standing Orders, the scheme of delegation and the council constitution which will set out among other things the terms of reference of the committees, the council's financial regulations and officer and members codes of conduct. Officers are currently working on drafts based on the relevant legislation and guidance with a view to producing final versions for consideration by committee on 30th January.</p> <p data-bbox="108 1243 502 1276">2.1.3 <u>Positions of responsibility</u></p> <p data-bbox="199 1288 1497 1590">In addition at the Annual Meeting for the new Council in March all positions of responsibility will need to be allocated for the forthcoming four year term (from April 2015 to March 2019). Parties discussed this at the recent briefing sessions and agreed to work through the process with officers in advance of the AGM once the guidance on the external positions of responsibility have been received from DoE. It is hoped this guidance will be received sometime in early January at which time discussions with the parties can commence. The actual "positions of responsibility" will also be presented to the 30th January meeting for agreement.</p> <p data-bbox="199 1601 1380 1635">Members can then agree the allocation of the special responsibility allowance at the same meeting.</p> <p data-bbox="108 1691 454 1724">2.1.4 <u>Area Working groups</u></p> <p data-bbox="199 1736 1497 2004">Consultation is now being held with members on the consideration of future geographic models of Council governance and what Council could fruitfully plan for on an area, in the context of what is happening on a city-wide basis. Linked to this is the potential local approach to community planning and regeneration, including engagement at a local level and the role of any area working groups. The results of this consultation, including proposals, will be brought to Committee in February 2015 and any agreed structures will feed into the overall governance model for the new council.</p>

2.2 Setting the District Rate 2015 -16

During November members received a briefing on the ongoing work to inform the setting of the rate. This included the development of the revenue estimates taking into account the extended boundary, transferring functions from central government, one off non recurrent costs associated with local government reform and capital financing requirements. The council is still awaiting final information on the amount of money it will receive from central government to deliver the new functions as this is a key factor in setting the rate. This is expected in the second week of January provided there is agreement at the Assembly level and officers will therefore bring updated reports to both January committee meetings with a possible further special meeting in early February if required. At its meeting in January, plans and priorities for service delivery, taking into account the extended boundary areas, will also be considered in the context of the setting of the rate.

2.3 Physical Programme

Members are aware that there is a need to develop a new physical programme (Capital Programme, Investment Funds, Maintenance Programme etc.) for the new Council area and that this is intrinsically linked to the rates setting process as detailed above. A detailed report on the Physical Programme will be brought to Committee in January. This will update Members on the current status of projects and any proposed movements under the Capital Programme as well as a detailed update on the ERDF funded projects. It will also outline the proposed non-recurrent and maintenance programmes and the proposals for the new areas transferring in. Update reports on the Physical Programme will continue to be brought on a monthly basis. In the coming months Members will also be updated on the current status of LIF and BIF and emerging options/proposals for these funding streams.

2.4 Organisation Development

2.4.1 At its November Committee, members were provided with details on the arrangements for the Peer Review and Decision Making Accountability (DMA) exercise being carried out by the Local Government Association (LGA) during December and January. Both pieces of work are part of the council's overall organisational development work stream and will help inform the organisations future resources, capacity and structures. Members will be engaged with the LGA when it is carrying out the peer review between 27th – 30th January 2015, with an update and next steps report on DMA presented to committee in February and a report on the outcome of the peer review in March.

2.4.2 Committee will also be required to consider the future operating model for the Waterfront Hall with an initial report on 30th January and a further report in March.

2.4.3 Proposals on the interim arrangements for the management of the Parks function will also be brought to committee in February and members will be advised of the appointment of the Director of Planning and Place in March along with information on the establishment of the new Planning function within the Chief Executive's Department.

<p>2.5</p>	<p>Corporate Plan / Council Priorities</p> <p>In September 2014 members agreed the process of developing the council's corporate plan and are engaged in setting priorities through the development of the Belfast Agenda, the rate setting process and the ongoing programme of work on governance and organisation development. The key elements of this will be brought together along with the emerging priorities for the city as the corporate plan for consideration on 20th February. It is recommended that the corporate plan should be for one year in the first instance to allow members a period of transition and review so that a longer term plan can be developed that aligns to the Belfast Agenda.</p>
<p>2.6</p>	<p>All the key decisions required to be taken by Shadow SP&R between January and March are detailed in Appendix 1.</p>
<p>3.0</p>	<p>Resource Implications</p>
<p>3.1</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Equality and Good Relations Implications</p>
<p>4.1</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>5.0</p>	<p>Recommendations</p>
<p>5.1</p>	<p>It is recommended that:</p> <p>Members note the above report and the key decision required between January and March 2015</p> <p>Agree that a one year corporate plan is brought to committee in February 2015</p>
<p>6.0</p>	<p>Documents attached</p>
<p>6.1</p>	<p>Appendix 1 – Key Decisions January – March 2015.</p>