



## Belfast City Council (Shadow)

<b>Report to</b>	Transition Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Organisation Central Support for LGR Transition
<b>Date:</b>	29 January 2015
<b>Reporting Officers:</b>	Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources Jill Minne, Director of Organisational Development

<b>1</b>	<b>Background</b>
1.1	As part of the local government reform programme, departments across the organisation are working to ensure the Council will be able to deliver its services to the extended boundary areas.
1.2	The organisation is also preparing to deliver new functions, most notably Planning, Off-Street Car Parking; and teams have also been working to ensure the organisation can deliver these services from 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2015.
1.3	As day one comes closer, Members has asked for assurances that everything will be in place to ensure a smooth transfer and continuity of service delivery. This report sets out at a high level the preparations being undertaken by the <b>Finance and Resources</b> and <b>Chief Executive's</b> departments.

<b>2</b>	<b>Supporting Transition</b>
2.1	As central support functions the Finance and Resources and Chief Executives departments have primarily focussed on helping the frontline services to prepare for the transfer of services on 1 <sup>st</sup> April.
2.2	Digital Services has been working to ensure all ICT requirements have been considered including networking and cabling to transferring assets, provision of IT equipment and telephony to transferring staff, data transfer etc. The service has also developed a training plan for implementation from 1 April for all transferring staff.
2.3	Financial Services has been working with services to develop new budgets for the transferring functions and the extended boundary areas as part of the rate setting process. It is also working to ensure transferring staff are included on the payroll system, transferring contractors and customers details are captured, systems are configured to ensure additional invoices can be processed and contractors can be paid.
2.4	AGRS has been providing ongoing assurances around key areas of the LGR programme and ongoing work is planned from 1 <sup>st</sup> April to ensure adequate controls and risk management processes are in place across the newly transferred services.

	<p>The Health and Safety Unit has been working with departments undertaking inspections of transferring assets, reviewing information and data transfer in relation to health and safety. The service has also prepared plans for the induction and training of transferring staff.</p>
2.5	<p>Corporate Communications is working to ensure ratepayers, existing and new, and staff are kept up to date with developments and progress. City Matters, website, social media, media and video are being used to get across messages and information. Design work on signage is also underway in relation to incoming buildings and assets, while discussions with Planning Service are ongoing on a range of communications issues, notably in relation to advertising which will provide challenging in relation to volume and resources.</p>
2.6	<p>HR has developed the elected member induction and capacity building programmes and developed and implemented the process for the effective and fair transfer of staff from Castlereagh and Lisburn. In addition, a programme of staff engagement and induction has been developed (and is ongoing) that includes site visits, presentations, information packs and videos for transferring staff; HR has also established a joint Castlereagh, Lisburn and Belfast TU forum. Further, the significant HR and OD implications of establishing the new Planning function within the Chief Executive's department are being managed – this includes transfer of staff from DOE Planning, recruitment of new director and other staff and the alignment of existing staff and skills to the function. HR is currently analysing terms and conditions and HR policies in conjunction with Legal Services to determine TUPE implications and an agreed position going forward.</p>
2.7	<p>Democratic Services has been servicing shadow and existing council; is preparing for the new governance arrangements post April 2014 in line with the 2014 Act and is undertaking member training on Code of Conduct and Decision-Making Processes</p>
2.8	<p>Legal Services is undertaking significant work in relation to a range of issues in the transition phase; these include new governance arrangements, transfer of assets and liabilities, transfer of staff and other preparatory/advice work in relation to the transfer of functions. Legal Services is also supporting services across the council in data transfer by way of advice and the provision of templates; it is also undertaking significant work with regard to the transfer of planning, in particular governance, capacity building and operating protocol.</p>
2.9	<p>All this transition work is planned and on target, with a particular focus on the transfer of planning between now and the end of March. The Finance and Resources and Chief Executives departments will continue to work with the Planning team on all outstanding issues.</p>

<b>3</b>	<b>Day One Transfer – Readiness Assessment</b>
3.1	<p>On 1<sup>st</sup> April there is expected to be little structural impact on the <b>Finance and Resources and Chief Executive's</b> departments themselves given they are not involved in delivering frontline services. The revenue estimates reflect that very little additional resource is required by the Finance and Resources department with just three staff transferring to Finance who will be dealing with the additional payroll requirements and the increase in accounts payable section.</p>
3.2	<p>The Chief Executive's department has five members of staff transferring – three into HR, one into Corporate Communications and one into Democratic Services. Additional resources in the Chief Executive's department relate primarily to Members' allowances and additional staff resources required to effectively deal with the potential legal implications of the transfer of the Planning function.</p>

3.3	Digital Services, Democratic Services and Corporate Communications have temporary staff to implement the significant ICT, governance and communication (and advertising) requirements associated with the reform programme and have a plan in place to ensure that sufficient staff will be on hand to deal with any issues relating to transfer. Once this is complete they will simply extend their services across the council within the current budget.
3.4	Legal Services also has a number of additional temporary staff who are assisting with the process of transferring assets and undertaking due diligence. The transfer of planning is likely to create a substantial additional burden for the service, as will ongoing work in respect of assets. Additional posts will be required post transition and it may therefore be necessary to extend the temporary contracts of existing temporary staff. The current staffing complement in respect of information management will be sufficient to undertake this function until recruitment can be undertaken.
3.5	From April 2015, Councils will also have responsibility for leading the process of community planning for their new area. This is an important new role which will bring partners together to develop a long term vision for the city and actions plans for implementing the vision. The Corporate Planning and Policy team within the Chief Executive's department has been supporting elected members' preparations for this new role.
3.6	Members' have agreed to call the community plan for Belfast the "Belfast Agenda" to show that it will be the one strategic plan for the city bringing together existing and new plans so that they can be more effective. During the year the team has supported elected members to undertake significant preparations including resident and stakeholder engagement and the development of a draft Belfast Agenda to provide the focus of further work post transition. Preparation to develop an interim one-year corporate plan for the new Council is also underway and this will be agreed with elected members in advance on 1 April 2015. Staff resources to support community planning have been included within departmental budgets for 2015/16 and there are no anticipated immediate risks to on-going implementation.
3.7	AGRS and HR have no additional staff and will see no immediate impact on day one. The health and safety unit has been working with services to ensure compliance with transferring assets from April 1 <sup>st</sup> with staff training planned for all new staff. The Planning function will have implications for the audit and risk management functions but these have been prioritised and built into the audit plan for 2015 / 16.
3.8	Under the new local government Act, Councils will, from 2015, have a general duty of performance improvement imposed on them. This will require putting in place arrangements for delivering improvement objectives that are relevant to the Council and to local communities while making best use of resources and evaluating the impact of our actions on a continuous basis. As the department with responsibility for performance management the Finance and Resources Department has been liaising with the DoE in relation to the implications for the Council. There will be no immediate impact on day one and work is ongoing to ensure appropriate mechanisms and frameworks are in place to comply with the act. Again this will not require additional resources.
3.9	There is a separate report on the Committees' agenda outlining the detailed work and day-1 preparations being taken forward by core frontline services relating to the new areas transferring into the city.

<b>4</b>	<b>Next Steps – Transformation</b>
4.1	The significant change that comes with LGR has presented an opportunity for the new Belfast City Council to transform its services and develop its role as the leading organisation in the city. The organisation of the future will need to be more outward facing and Members are keen for the Council to operate at a city-wide and neighbourhood level with opportunities to deliver services appropriately within neighbourhoods while working in a coherent way with other agencies in the city. Ultimately this would involve more efficient use of resources.
4.2	The central support services have a key role in developing and supporting this new organisation and work has begun to ensure the right capacity, frameworks, structures and skills will be put in place. This includes the development of internal and external governance structures, the further implementation of the organisation and improvement agenda, a far-reaching capacity building and communications programme, the development of new organisational structures, a revised efficiency programme, new planning and performance frameworks, city branding and a city financing strategy.
4.3	The Council's central support services will also begin to explore how they can support the local government sector through the delivery of some of its services including ICT and advertising.

<b>5</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
5.1	Resources have been included in the revenue estimates for 2015 /16.

<b>6</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Implications</b>
6.1	None

<b>7</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
7.1	Members are asked to note the content of the report

<b>8</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
8.1	None