



Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Report to:	Shadow Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Political Management Arrangements for the new Council
Date:	13 February 2015
Reporting Officer:	Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources Emer Husbands, Strategic Performance Manager

1.0	Background
1.1	<p>At their meeting on 28th November 2014 members considered a report on the proposed political management arrangements for the new council post April 2015, including possible committee structures and how they should be constituted. At that meeting SSP&R committee agreed the following:</p> <ol 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, will 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
1.2	<p>Parties are now being asked to consider their nominations for the various committees for agreement at the AGM in March 2015. Proposals for the AGM are also contained within this report. To assist members with this process further detail on the role and operation of the new committees is now outlined in this report.</p>

2.0	Role of the Committees
2.1	<p>Regulatory Committees – Planning and Licensing</p> <p>While there will be five committees in the new Council two of these committees, Planning and Licensing, will be exercising regulatory functions and will therefore have a different role to the other three standing committees. Both committees will be quasi-judicial in nature and will therefore have delegated authority from the Council to exercise a number of their functions. This will mean that the decisions of both</p>

Committees will not be subject to Council approval or call-in.

The council has had a Licensing committee for a number of years and it essentially will continue to operate as before with terms of reference attached at Appendix 1. Work has been ongoing throughout the shadow period with the Shadow Planning Committee on the operation of the new Planning Committee, including training, consideration of Planning decisions and best practice site visits. Party Group Briefings have also been held to discuss the operation of the Planning Committee and its terms of reference are attached at Appendix 2.

2.2 Standing Committees – Strategic Policy and Resources, Place and Growth, People and Communities - Delivering the Council Services

2.2.1 In the first instance it is important that the services across the Council are aligned to one of the new committees to ensure continuity of delivery and decision making.

2.2.2 The **Strategic Policy and Resources Committee** will be responsible for setting the strategic direction of the Council through the development of its corporate plan and other key corporate strategies and policies. It would also ensure effective use of resources and value for money for ratepayers, and oversee the Council's relationship with a number of key agencies and partners. The services of the council that will report into the committee will be those contained within the Chief Executive and Finance and Resources departments; Human Resources and Organisational Development, Corporate Communications, Legal Services, Democratic Services, Corporate Policy and Strategic Planning, Finance and Performance, Digital Services and Audit Governance and Risk Services. Property and Projects will also report on Procurement, Contract Management, Programme Management, Estates Unit, and Facilities Management. Good relations will also be the responsibility of this committee.

2.2.3 The **Place and Growth Committee** will be responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects directed to the regeneration and growth of the city in the context of the outcomes agreed in the community (Belfast Agenda) and corporate plans and other corporate strategies. This committee will also oversee work relating to Economic Development, Urban Development, Tourism, Culture and Arts, European and International Relations, Waterfront and Ulster Halls, City Markets, City Events, Belfast Castle, Malone House, Belfast Zoo and the transferring car parks.

2.2.4 The **People and Communities Committee** will be responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects aimed at improving quality of life at a local level in the context of the outcomes agreed in the community (Belfast Agenda) and corporate plans and other corporate strategies. The key frontline services will report into this committee including Environmental Services; Cleansing; Waste Management; Parks and Cemeteries service (excluding zoo, Malone House and Belfast Castle), Neighbourhood and Development Services; Community Services, Community Safety and Emergency Planning. The committee will also be responsible for all community based assets such as community centres, playgrounds, pitches and parks.

2.3

2.3.1 Developing the Belfast Agenda, Delivering outcomes, monitoring performance

Given the members ambitions for the city and the council which are emerging through the Belfast Agenda

it is clear that the new committees will have to support the development and implementation of key outcomes for the city and its neighbourhoods as well as continuing to oversee the delivery of key services. The outcomes will in the first instance need to be agreed and aligned to the relevant committee who will then have a role in further defining these. The committees will then have a further role in the implementation and monitoring of progress. This will include receiving regular performance reports on the progress of key projects and indicators from council officers and key stakeholders. Committees can, if appropriate, ask stakeholders to present updates on progress and establish task and finish working groups to review the delivery of key outcomes.

2.4

Managing Performance

2.4.1

Members will be aware that, under Part 12 of the Local Government Act 2014, Councils will, from 2015, have a general duty of performance improvement imposed upon 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.

2.4.2

The three standing committees, Strategic Policy and Resources, Place and Growth and People and Communities will therefore have an 'outcomes and performance' function to ensure that this statutory obligation is met. The Committees will do this by monitoring and overseeing the various plans that they are responsible for delivering. At the strategic level this will include monitoring of the implementation of both the Community (Belfast Agenda) and Corporate Plans, in terms of the progress of activities and performance indicators, as well as overseeing the work of the new Leisure Trust. The Committees will also monitor service delivery in the context of thematic outcomes agreed through the Belfast Agenda. They will also have a role in overseeing how the needs of individual areas are being met and how well, and how efficiently, the organisation's objectives are being supported by our services.

2.4.5

While these committees will be responsible for the production of policies relevant to those functions and roles for which they are responsible, the policies of the existing council remain valid for the new council until they are amended, replaced or rescinded. This is the legal position under regulation 9 of the Local Government (transitional, supplementary, incidental provisions and modifications) Regulations NI 2014.

The role of each committee, including the individual council services each is responsible for, is outlined in Appendix 3.

2.5

Area Working Groups

Members have also indicated that they want to continue with area working groups. Proposals are being considered in the first instance on the geographies and number of groups. Relationships between the area working groups and the standing committees, particularly the People and Communities committee, will also need to be defined and agreed.

2.6

External Governance Arrangements

In line with the development of the Belfast Agenda, officers will also be developing proposals for city wide

	governance structures. These will be brought back to members for consideration.
3.0	Audit and Risk Panel
3.1	The SSP&R Committee at its meeting on the 28 th November also agreed to the establishment of an Audit and Risk Panel comprised of one Member from each of the political party groupings on the Council (up to six Members), with at least one independent member, reporting in to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on a quarterly basis. It was also agreed that any issues requiring the attention of one of the new standing committees could be referred to that committee.
3.2	The Panel will provide independent review of the council's governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversee the financial reporting and annual governance processes. It will provide an independent scrutiny of the Council's financial and non-financial performance.
3.3	The statement of purpose and terms of reference reflect the suggested terms of reference for an audit committee as included within the CIPFA publication 'Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (2013) and are attached at Appendix 4 .
4.0	Next Steps Council AGM
4.1	The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 and the associated Transitional Regulations, stipulate that new councils shall hold a second Annual General Meeting (AGM) during the transitional (shadow) period for the purpose of appointing positions of responsibility for the four year term beginning 1 April 2015. It is proposed that this meeting takes place on Thursday 19 th March 2015.
4.2	It is proposed that the Council also uses this Annual General Meeting to appoint Councillors to Committees under Schedule 2 of the 2014 Act. Whilst the appointment of councillors to committees does not have to take place at the Annual General meeting, Members may wish to fill both the positions of responsibility and the committee places at the same time.
4.3	Further draft regulations are currently being made to provide for the appointment of Aldermen at this second annual meeting. These regulations will replicate the existing provisions of the Local Government (Modification of Borough Charters) Order (Northern Ireland) 1973 in respect of electing aldermen but with one minor amendment – the removal of the requirement to elect aldermen immediately after the appointment of the lord mayor and deputy mayor. This will allow for the election of aldermen to take place at the end of the annual meeting and to remain separate from the processes for filling of positions of responsibility and appointing councillors to committees. A draft AGM agenda is attached at Appendix 5.
5.0	Resource Implications
5.1	None
6.0	Equality and Good Relations Implications
6.1	None

7.0	Recommendations
5.1	It is recommended that Members note the contents of the report and agree the Agenda and date of the AGM as the 19 th March 2015.
8.0	Documents attached
8.1	<p>Appendix 1 Terms of Reference Licensing Committee</p> <p>Appendix 2 Terms of Reference Planning Committee</p> <p>Appendix 3 Terms of Reference Strategic Policy and Resources, Place and Growth, People and Communities</p> <p>Appendix 4 Terms of Reference Audit and Risk Panel</p> <p>Appendix 5 Draft Agenda and Running Order for AGM</p>