



Belfast City Council

Report to	Development Committee
Subject:	Cancellation of Standing Committee Meetings in November
Date:	21st October 2014
Reporting Officer:	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (ext 6314)
Contact Officer:	Barry Flynn, Democratic Services Officer (6312)

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	In November it will be necessary for two Party Briefings to be organised for each Party on the Council so that the future governance arrangements for the new Council and the Rate setting process can be discussed fully. The Shadow SP&R Committee, at its meeting on 26th September, agreed to take both these matters forward through Party Briefings in the first instance.

2	Key Issues
2.1	Given the busy Committee Schedule and the call on most Members' time in attending meetings of both the existing Council and the Shadow Council, it is considered that it would prove to be very difficult to organise a second series of Party Briefings unless some time can be made free.
2.2	<p>The Chief Officers of the several Council Departments have advised that there would be unlikely to be any major disruption to the provision of services if the Standing Committees for Parks & Leisure, Development, Health & Environmental Services and Licensing were to be cancelled for November, so long as the general scheme of delegation which applies during the recess month of July each year were to be extended for that month. The scheme which applies in July, as set out in the Standing Orders for the Council indicate that:</p> <p><i>“Committees shall meet on a monthly basis. Unless in the case of emergency, Committees shall not meet during the month of July. During that month the business of the Council normally managed by the Committees shall, where circumstances render it necessary, be discharged by the Chief Executive or, in her absence, her Deputy acting upon recommendations made by the Directors of</i></p>

	<p><i>Departments. If, however, any matter arises which in the opinion of the Chief Executive or her Deputy ought properly to be placed before a Committee for consideration, the Chief Executive or her Deputy, in consultation with the Chair or Deputy Chair concerned shall, if necessary, call a meeting of the Committee for that purpose.”</i></p>
2.3	Chief Officers for those Committees would not seek to have any decisions taken under delegated authority in November if the decision could be delayed until the meetings scheduled for December, 2014. Where any decision was time bound and for which it was considered to be necessary to seek to use the Chief Executive’s delegated authority during November, such action would not be taken unless the Chief Executive had consulted with the Party Leaders and the relevant Committee Chairman. If, after this consultation, it was considered that the matter in question would be better referred for Committee decision then it would either be taken to the appropriate Committee in December or be taken to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in November.
2.4	It is also considered that the scheduled meeting of the Town Planning Committee would take place in November so that there would not be any delay to the issuing of planning approvals for development. In addition, the usual meeting of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee would also be scheduled to take place, in case there were any matters where it was considered that it would be preferable for Members’ views to be taken rather than exercising the delegated authority.
2.5	It should be noted that the monthly meetings of the Shadow Council Committees would continue to take place during November.
2.6	The Party Leaders Forum, at its meeting on 3rd October, agreed to this course of action, subject to the safeguards set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	None.

4	Equality and Good Relations Implications
4.1	None associated with this report.

5	Recommendations
5.1	The Committee is recommended to agree to cancel its scheduled meeting in November, 2014 for the reasons outlined above.