



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Review of the Civic Forum
Date:	22nd August, 2008
Reporting Officer:	Mr. L. Steele, Head of Committee and Members' Services
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Relevant Background Information

Correspondence has been received from the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (appendix 1) indicating that the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister is undertaking a review of The Civic Forum.

The Forum is a consultative mechanism and was established under Section 56 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 which requires the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, with the approval of the Assembly, to make arrangements for obtaining views on social, economic and cultural issues. The membership of the Forum is comprised of ten sectors of civic society, including the business, trade union and voluntary sectors.

Key Issues

The Terms of Reference of the Review are to:

- Examine the effectiveness and appropriateness of the current structure, operation and membership of the Civic Forum in consultation as necessary with a wide range of interests representative of society as a whole;
- Draw on the experiences elsewhere in determining the most appropriate mechanism for engaging with civic society
- Make recommendations on the most appropriate mechanism and arrangements for engaging with and obtaining the views of civic society on social, economic and cultural matters and in ensuring accountable and inclusive participation by civic society; and
- Make clear recommendations on how this mechanism would operate in practice, including governance, legal and financial matters and secretariat arrangements that would best support such a mechanism.

The closing date for responses is Friday, 29th August, 2008.

Key Issues (continued)

The consultation paper poses a number of questions such as what respondees would consider to be the main strengths and achievements of the Civic Forum and what were the main weaknesses. The Council has been consulted as one of a range of statutory bodies and it may not be entirely appropriate for it to pass comment and judgement on the mechanism and process and accordingly I would suggest that comment might be better coming from the Political Parties themselves.

Resource Implications

There are no financial or Human Resource implications associated with this report.

Recommendation

That response to the Review of the Civic Forum be left to the individual Political Parties.

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – Northern Ireland Local Government Association Briefing Paper.