Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	NILGA IS Strategy Consultation
Date:	24th April, 2009
Reporting Officer:	Gerry Millar, Director of Core Improvement Team
Contact Officer:	Rose Crozier, Head of ISB, Ext 4200
	Marie McCrory, IS Consultant, Ext 4233
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1.0	**Relevant Background Information**
1.1	In April 2008, NILGA commissioned Deloitte to assist with the development of a draft IS Strategy for local authorities in Northern Ireland. Funding for the project was provided by the Delivery and Innovation Division of the Department for Finance and Personnel (DFP). A project board was formed to oversee the development of the project with representatives from DFP, NILGA, Omagh District Council and Belfast City Council. Members will note that Marie McCrory from th Council's ISB was involved in developing the project brief and was a member of the project board which had overseen the production of the draft IS Strategy for the region which has been recently issued by NILGA for the consideration of councils (a copy of a summary of the draft IS Strategy is attached at **Appendix 1**).
1.2	Throughout the project there was extensive consultation involving IT professionals from all NI local authorities, Council Officers representing specific front line services, Chief Executives and Elected Members. Knowledge and experience was drawn from local, national and international examples of best practice.
1.3	The main aim of the project was to define key priorities for local authorities embarking on the journey through RPA and to highlight the main business and technology challenges and constraints facing them.
2.0	**Key Issues**
2.1	It is recommended for Members consideration that Belfast City Council should support, in principle, of the development of a common IS Strategy for local government within Northern Ireland, as such a strategy would: • enable service delivery benefits which can be directly linked to citizens priorities; • emphasise the importance of the IT function in the strategic delivery of services; • enable operational efficiencies to be realised as well as ensuring reliable delivery of IT services • enable greater integration between systems to avoid duplication of effort; • consider how secure, reliable and trusted relationships can be maintained between citizens and local government irrespective of how interactions take place; • increase the accessibility of relevant and appropriate information to appropriate partner organisations; • promote the need for cleansing and unifying the data structures held across Councils at both local and regional level to promote information sharing, storage and general data availability; • promote the use of geo-spatial data and information for appropriate business areas;

	• endorse the requirement for enhanced performance management, business intelligence and reporting tools that increase the quality and ease of reporting while also allowing greater customer insight; • recognise the benefits that could be gained by implementation of mobile technology in a range of Council environments; and • provide the ability to work more flexibly including home working, which includes extended service support arrangements as well as remote access to systems from a mobile devices.
2.2	Belfast City Council believes that ICT is a key enabler of change and service improvement and that an ambitious strategy has the potential to act as a foundation to delivering effective change through strong leadership and engagement.
2.3	Within the current draft IS Strategy, there remain uncertainties in relation to how the Strtaegy would be implemented given the current absence of any funding to deliver and the lack of clarity around the necessary governance arrangements and capacity to delivery the strategy.
2.4	Also, the current strategy does not take account of functions transferring from Central Government following RPA in terms of the information assets, infrastructure and service delivery.

3.0	**Resource Implications**
3.1	**Financial** At present there are no financial implications **Human Resources** At present there are no resource implications **Asset and Other Implications** At present there is no impact on Council assets

4.0	**Recommendations**
4.1	It is recommended that the Committee: i) note the contents of this report at the attached Appendix; ii) agree to endorse, in principle, the development of a common IS Strategy for local government in Northern Ireland subject to further clarification being provided in terms of the resources, governance and capacity to be put in place to support implementation; and iii) agree to formally write to NILGA on this basis of point ii) above.

5.0	**Decision Tracking**
5.1	Letter to be formally sent to NILGA following ratification by Council > Rose Crozier, Head of ISB

6.0	**Key abbreviations**
6.1	IS Strategy - Information Systems Strategy RPA - Review of Public Administration

7.0	**Documents Attached**
7.1	Appendix 1: Summary of draft IS Strategy & Roadmap for Local Government in Northern Ireland