



Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources (Transition) Committee
Subject:	Review of Public Administration Update
Date:	19 th June, 2009
Reporting Officer:	Peter McNaney (ext. 6217)
Contact Officer:	Kevin Heaney, RPA Project Coordinator (ext. 6202)

1.0	<u>Relevant Background Information</u>
1.1	The Review of Public Administration (RPA) process is now entering into the critical stage of implementation whereby primary legislation is being drafted, implementation structures established and active consideration being given to the transitional arrangements to be put in place to support local government reform within Northern Ireland together with ongoing transfer of functions issues.
2.0	<u>Key Issues</u>
2.1	<u>Timetable</u>
2.1.1	<p>The key driver over the next number of months will be the legislative timetable and the need to ensure that the Council is geared up and prepared to engage within this process (e.g. agreed corporate positions on those key policy proposals emerging from the Policy Development Panels which will shape the legislation; develop an understanding of the consequences for the Council; build political awareness and a constituency around the key areas of concern etc). In terms of key milestones in the process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ June – September 2009 - within the next number of weeks the DoE are scheduled to release two major consultation exercises on the Local Government (Finance) Bill and the Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill which will significantly dictate the future shape and operation of councils post RPA. (refer to Appendix 1 for timetable and content of the Legislative Bills). ▪ 30th June - Boundary Commissioner to release final recommendations on new Local Government Boundaries ▪ May 2011 - Elections to new Councils
2.2	<u>Transition Committee/Transition Management Teams - Key Tasks and Milestones</u>
2.2.1	The DoE has recently issued an Advisory Note (attached at Appendix 2) which sets out the proposed key tasks and milestones for Transition Committees and Transition Management Teams. Whilst Belfast City Council stands in somewhat of a different position to its local government counterparts, it will still need to be cognisant of the proposed programme of work and key milestones to be put in place around the RPA. Accordingly, relevant strands of work have been incorporated within the Council's own implementation plan.
2.2.2	Work is currently underway to translate this Advisory Note into a detailed high-level RPA Implementation (transition) Plan for Belfast City Council. It would be intended that this initial plan would form the basis of a Forward Work Plan for the committee in regards to those important RPA related issues which need to be taken forward and aligned to the overall RPA implementation programme.
2.2.3	Subsequently, it is proposed that a familiarisation workshop be scheduled, for August 2009, with the newly appointed Members of the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to examine

	the respective roles and responsibilities of the Committee within its capacity as the Council's RPA Transition Committee and to seek early political direction and buy-in to an RPA 'Forward Work Plan' for the Committee which is aligned to the overall RPA implementation programme.
2.2.4	Inevitably, the level of RPA related activity will grow in intensity and scope throughout the transition period and its management and delivery must be adequately resourced and co-ordinated. It is important to recognise that planning is a process of constant review, re-prioritisation, refinement and refocusing of effort and resource in line with shifting demands and needs. Therefore, this timetable and work plan should be viewed as live documents which will be further amended to reflect potential changes to the external programme of work or to take account of important issues as they may arise of ad-hoc issues as they arise.
2.3	<u>Engagement with Lisburn/Castlereagh Transition Committee</u>
2.3.1	Members will recall that correspondence had been received from the Transition Committee for Lisburn City and Castlereagh Borough requesting that the Belfast Transition Committee consider their representation on its Committee. This request had been considered by the Committee, at its meeting on the 8 th May 2009, and it was agreed... <i>“that both Lisburn City Council and Castlereagh Borough Council be advised that Belfast’s Transition Committee had already been established and the membership agreed by the Environment Minister but that the Committee would be willing to meet with other Transition Committees to discuss areas of mutual concern in relation to the transfer of assets and functions”.</i>
2.3.2	Subsequently, the Chief Executive has recently received the following two pieces of correspondence from Castlereagh Borough Council (on behalf of the Castlereagh/Lisburn Transition Committee): 1. Greater Belfast Area discussions , dated 28 th May (copy attached at Appendix 3) – sought the Council’s involvement in a meeting between the Councils within the Greater Belfast area to discuss wider infrastructure and marketing issues on a sub-regional basis. 2. Representation on Belfast’s Transition Committee , dated 3 rd June (copy attached at Appendix 4) – a meeting has been sought between the Chief Executive of Lisburn City Council, Acting Chief Executive of Castlereagh Borough Council, together with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Castlereagh/Lisburn Transition Committee and representatives from Belfast City Council to discuss its concerns in regard to representation.
2.3.3	If it is agreed that this meeting proceeds, it is recommended that the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Council’s Transition Committee (i.e. SP&R) attend the meeting alongside the Chief Executive.
2.4	<u>Review of RPA Delivery Infrastructure</u>
2.4.1	The RPA Strategic Leadership Board had agreed, at its meeting on 22 nd May 2009, that a review would be undertaken of the established local government reform programme organisational structures i.e. SLB, PDPs and RTCG. The review will, inter alia, make recommendations on appropriate structures and governance arrangements for managing and integrating the continued work necessary for transition to May 2011.
2.4.2	The Joint DoE/NILGA Secretariat has arranged a focus group session for Thursday 22 nd June 2009 at 1.30pm in NILGA Offices and has invited all Chairs (or that of a nominee) of Transition Committees to participate in this event (copy of the invite received is attached at Appendix 5). The purpose of the event is to provide attendees with an opportunity to submit the views of the respective Transition Committees on the reform programme to date and put forward any suggestions on improvements to the structures and processes for the next stage of the reform process.

2.5	<u>Moving to implementation</u>
2.5.1	Notwithstanding this review the focus of the RPA process is rapidly moving towards the implementation phase with support structures being put in place with the Environment Minister recently agreeing to the establishment of a Local Government Joint Forum to take forward negotiation and consultation on all HR related issues; and a Finance and Estates Sub-Group of the Regional Transition Coordination Group to take forward consideration of Finance and Estates implementation issues. All efforts will be taken to ensure that Belfast City Council is represented on these established structures.
2.6	<u>RPA Seminars for Transition Committees & Transition Management Teams</u>
2.6.1	To support information dissemination and sharing of best practice it was agreed that a series of seminars would be hosted by the SLB Joint Secretariat with the support of SOLACE to provide guidance and support during the transition process. There is no fee for attendance at these events.
2.6.2	The first seminar in the series will take place on Monday 6 July 2009, 9.45am-3pm in the Craigavon Civic Centre and is entitled ' Making Transition Work: The Role of Elected Members and Officers '(further details are attached at Appendix 6). Copies of this have already been circulated to all members.
2.6.3	Approval is therefore sought for the attendance of members of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at the relevant RPA seminars.

3.0 Resource Implications

Whilst there are clearly Human Resource and financial implications attached the Council's ongoing involvement and management of the RPA change process, there are no direct implications contained within this report. It is the intention to map out resource requirements at our COMT workshop in June.

4.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- a) agree that an RPA workshop/familiarisation session will those Members of Council's Transition Committee (i.e. SP&R) in August 2009;
- b) consider the request from the Castlereagh/Lisburn Transition Committee in regard to Belfast's engagement with neighbouring councils to discuss issues of mutual concern;
- c) consider the request from Castlereagh/Lisburn Transition Committee to meet with the Council to discuss their concerns in regard to representation on the Belfast Transition Committee and agree that the Chair and Deputy Chair of SP&R and the Chief Executive would meet them if it is agreed to proceed;
- d) approve the attendance of the Chair (or that of a nominee) to the scheduled Focus Group sessions on the review of the RPA Reform Structures; and
- e) approve the attendance of Members of the Council's Transition Committee (i.e. SP&R) to the RPA information seminars to be hosted by the SLB Joint Secretariat.

5.0 Decision Tracking

1. RPA familiarisation session for those Members of the Council's Transition Committee (i.e. SP&R) - Director of Improvement by August 2009;
2. Convene meeting between representations of the Castlereagh/Lisburn Transition Committee and the Belfast City Council Transition Committee, Chief Executive, by September 2009

6.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: RPA Legislative Timetable

Appendix 2: DoE Advisory Note on Key Tasks & Milestones for Transition Committees/ Transition Management Teams

Appendix 3: Correspondence from Castlereagh Borough Council re: sub-regional discussions

Appendix 4: Correspondence from Castlereagh Borough Council re: meeting with Belfast City Council to discuss concerns in regard to representation on Belfast Transition Committee

Appendix 5: Review of the RPA Reform Structures – invite to focus group session

Appendix 6: Seminar Programme - Making Transition Work: The Role of Elected Members and Officers