



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Memorandum of Understanding between Belfast City Council and Land and Property Services
Date:	19 June 2009
Reporting Officer:	Trevor Salmon, Director of Corporate Services
Contact Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Improvement Manager Donal Rogan , Building Control

Purpose of report

The purpose of this report is to present to Members for consideration an agreement between the council and Land and Property Services (LPS) in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). A copy of the MOU can be found at Appendix One.

Relevant Background Information

Members will recall that it was agreed by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 17 October 2008 to establish a Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the council and the LPS for the overall service provided by the LPS.

Over the past year the council has been working closely with LPS and good working relationships have been established. Building Control Service already has a formal agreement with LPS in regards to notifications of new and altered buildings. Members were of the opinion that the council should enter into a formal agreement with LPS in the form of a service level agreement for the overall service provided by LPS. By doing this it was argued that the council would be better placed to work with LPS to improve its key processes and to ensure that it provides value for money to the both the Council and the ratepayers in Belfast.

Members should note that the agreement which is being recommended to them is known as a Memorandum of Understanding rather than a service level agreement as this better reflects not just the current level of service but also the need to improve.

The MOU has been independently reviewed on behalf of the council by the Institute of Revenue, Rating and Valuation.

Memorandum of Understanding

The overall aims of the MOU are as follows:

- To provide a framework for LPS and the council to work in a spirit of collaboration, assisting each other in the delivery of their corporate objectives.

- To maximise the proportion of collectible rates collected and to create further equity in the rating system within the council area through the provision of timely and accurate information.
- To assist in the economic development of the council area through the sharing of timely, accurate and current information including in the areas of robust financial planning and spatial referencing of property through addressing and mapping, as well as registration of properties throughout the council area in the Land Register and effective asset management.

The MOU covers key areas of concern to Members such as:

- Maintenance of the Valuation List;
- Vacant property control;
- Provision of Estimated Penny Product information;
- Cost of collection, irrecoverables, Valuation Tribunal and Lands Tribunal decisions; and
- Legislative and policy changes.

The MOU also highlights areas for specific focus in 2009/10 and it is recommended that priority is given to the following:

- Agreeing Performance Indicators, informed by benchmarking and consideration of best practice;
- Robust management of vacant property listings, in conformance with the LPS Vacancy Strategy;
- Robust management of rating debt so as to maximise recovery and minimise irrecoverables.

Formal reviews of the MOU will be held biannually involving senior managers from both the council and the LPS. The outcomes of these reviews will be reported to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Recommendations

Members are asked to :

1. Agree to the adoption of this MOU between the Council and the LPS.