



<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy and Resources (Transition) Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	RPA: Engagement with Lisburn/Castlereagh Transition Committee
<b>Date:</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> September 2009
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Peter McNaney (ext. 6217)
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<b>1.0</b>	<b><u>Relevant Background Information</u></b>
1.1	Members will recall that following a request received from the Lisburn/Castlereagh Transition Committee to meet with the Council to discuss their concerns in regard to the RPA transition process, the Committee agreed, at its meeting on 19 <sup>th</sup> June 2009, that an all-party delegation consisting of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman, the Party Group Leaders on the Committee (or their nominees) and the Chief Executive would meet with the Lisburn/Castlereagh Transition Committee.
<b>2.0</b>	<b><u>Key Issues</u></b>
2.1.1	Subsequently, a constructive meeting between both Transition Committees had taken place on 25 <sup>th</sup> August 2009. At the meeting there was a clear consensus around a number of common aims in relation to the RPA transition process, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ensuring that the best interests of both the citizen and staff are pursued;</li> <li>▪ ensuring that service continuity is maintained or improved;</li> <li>▪ seeking to moderate the potential impact on the rate resulting from the reform process; and</li> <li>▪ ensuring, as far as possible, a seamless RPA transition.</li> </ul>
2.1.2	Whilst there was a recognition that there still remains some uncertainty around the final decision of the Environment Minister and NI Executive in regard to the new local government boundaries, it was agreed that both Transition Committees need to work in partnership to consider and plan for those areas of mutual concern so as to ensure a successful and smooth transition from the old to new councils. It was the consensual view that any initial work would not be nugatory.
2.1.3	General discussions took place in relation to some of the key issues which needed to be explored in detail (e.g. staffing; convergence; operational/service delivery; aligning financial planning processes and rate harmonisation; transfer of assets and liabilities; joint communications etc). It was agreed, however, that the inaugural meeting should be very much focused on familiarisation among both Transition Committees and agreeing a process to enable detailed consideration and discussions around the aforementioned issues to take place in the near future.
2.1.4	Accordingly, it was recommended that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ a further joint meeting be convened for two months time (late October 09) - at which a schedule of future meetings would be agreed;</li> <li>▪ the venue of meetings would rotate around the three Council offices with the next meeting in October to be held in Belfast City Hall;</li> <li>▪ that the hosting Transition Committee would chair the joint meeting; and</li> <li>▪ a joint officer team be tasked with working up a detailed agenda for the meeting around the key issues for discussion and preparing relevant supporting reports setting out potential options and any associated consequences.</li> </ul> <p>This would enable a more informed discussion to take place between both Transition Committees.</p>

2.1.5	Members will note that a detailed report will be submitted for the consideration of the Committee, at its first meeting in October 09, setting out detailed options and potential consequences around the key issues for discussion with the Lisburn and Castlereagh Transition Committee.
2.1.6	Recognition of the special circumstances which exist between Lisburn City, Castlereagh Borough and Belfast City Council in regard to the RPA transition/convergence process and concerns had been raised in relation to the absence of any clear guidance from the DoE and Minister. It was suggested that consideration be given to the possible attendance (as necessary) of senior DoE officials at future joint meetings of the Transition Committees so as to enable them to first hand experience/knowledge of the issues of concern and areas which require further clarity.

### **3.0 Resource Implications**

There will be clearly Human Resource implications (i.e. Members and staff time) attached to the continued engagement with the Lisburn and Castlereagh Transition Committee and developing the necessary evidence base and option papers on the key issues.

### **4.0 Recommendations**

Members are asked to:

- a) agree the continued engagement with the Lisburn/Castlereagh Transition Committee on transitional related matters;
- b) reaffirm that the Belfast Member delegation consists of the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Party Group Leaders on the Transition Committee (or their nominees);
- c) agree that officers engage with their counterparts in Lisburn/Castlereagh to work up an agreed agenda and relevant briefing papers for the next joint meeting of the Transition Committees;
- d) note that the proposed next joint meeting of the Transition Committees will take place in late October in Belfast City Hall;
- e) note that a detailed report on the issues for discussion with the Lisburn/Castlereagh Transition Committee will be submitted for the consideration of the Committee at its 1<sup>st</sup> meeting in October.

### **5.0 Decision Tracking**

1. Convene second meeting between representatives of the Lisburn/Castlereagh and Belfast Transition Committee (i.e. SP&R) for late October - Director of Improvement by October 2009;
2. Submit for the consideration of the Committee a detailed report examining the key transition issues which need to be explored with the Lisburn/Castlereagh Transition Committee - Director of Improvement by October 2009