Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Belfast City Council's connection to Network NI
Date:	20 November 2009
Reporting Officer:	Rose Crozier, Head of ISB
Contact Officer:	Paul Gribben, IS Portfolio Manager

Relevant Background Information
Currently each of the 26 councils in Northern Ireland has its own network and telecoms systems linking various locations. These networks are independent of each other and provide no interconnectivity outside an individual council area. Although these arrangements have been effective in supporting the operation of the individual councils, they have not been designed with a wider local government perspective in mind. In the context of the reorganisation of local government, and the transfer of functions from central government, this approach will not be sustainable post 2011. New councils will require connectivity to functions transferring from Central Government for example the centrally based Planning Service. There is also no current means of network connectivity between councils, a particular problem for amalgamating councils needing to share applications and information and who require communications links between offices and depots within the enlarged district. The new Local Government arrangements will require the Council to have greater connectivity beyond the boundaries of the existing Council area. The existing network infrastructure precludes this as there is no interconnectivity between council areas and other agencies. Network NI is a managed common network service. It is the regional communications 'backbone' infrastructure procured by NI Civil Service (provided by Eircom NI) and currently in operation across the NI Civil service. Connection to this 'backbone' would provide the required connectivity within new council areas, across councils and to centrally delivered services. PDP B has agreed in principle to utilise the Network NI infrastructure. A process to connect to Network NI (On Boarding) has been agreed to bring additional public sector bodies (including councils) on to the service. The on boarding process is considerable and requires connecting organisation to achieve certain security standards. By connecting to Network NI the requirements for connectivity to transferring functions and inter council connectivity would be met.

Key Issues

1. The network is owned and managed by central government.

2. Each council will be required to sign up to a code of connection that would require them to implement ISO 27001 within 2 years.

   The purpose of ISO 27001 is to help organisations establish and maintain an information security management system.

3. There will be a requirement for further investment in information security to achieve ISO 27001. The on boarding process will help establish gaps in requirements and begin the move to achieving ISO 27001.

4. The alternative to connecting to Network NI would require the Council to assess communications infrastructure requirements for the new Council and its new locations and potentially invest significantly in procuring and implementing new infrastructure.

Resource Implications

Financial

One off Installation cost   £39,000
Annual recurring license cost   £25,000

Connection: £19,500 (per connection)
Annual support and maintenance: £12,500 (per connection)

The Council will require at least 2 connections to ensure resiliency.

Installation costs are provided for in the capital programme.
Annual costs will be paid for from ISB's revenue budget.

Human Resources
No additional impact on staff is anticipated.

Recommendations
Approve the Council connecting to network NI and beginning the on-boarding process.
Decision Tracking
Officer responsible: Rose Crozier, Head of ISB Action to be completed by: March 2010
Key to Abbreviations
ISB Information Services Belfast
Documents Attached
None