



**Belfast City Council**

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy and Resources (Transition) Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Review of Public Administration Update
<b>Date:</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> February 2010
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Peter McNaney, Chief Executive
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Kevin Heaney, RPA Project Coordinator (ext. 6202)

<b>1.0</b>	<b><u>Relevant Background Information</u></b>
1.1	Members will be aware that the Environment Minister, Edwin Poots MLA is locked in ongoing negotiations with Ministerial colleagues within the NI Executive regarding the RPA local government reform process and progressing necessary legislation including the Local Government Boundaries (NI) Order and the Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill. Discussions are also ongoing in relation to how the reform programme will be funded.
1.2	It is understood that if there is no political agreement around these critical issues secured within the coming weeks, then the already tight legislative timetable would be unachievable and the local reform programme (in its current form) could be at significant risk.
1.3	Resulting from the recent Hillsborough Agreement, a cross-party Ministerial Working Group has been established to undertake a trawl of all Executive business (which will no doubt include the RPA) with a view to recommendations being made on how progress could be made on any and all outstanding matters by the end of February. It is understood that this will include a programme of work detailing how any remaining outstanding issues will be resolved.
<b>2.0</b>	<b><u>Key Issues</u></b>
	<b><u>Engagement with Lisburn and Castlereagh</u></b>
2.1	Notwithstanding that a final decision has yet to be taken on the new Local Government boundaries, the Council had entered into a process of discussion and engagement (at both a Members and Officer level) with the voluntary RPA Transition Committee and Transition Management Team for Lisburn and Castlereagh.
2.2	To date there has been two meetings of the Joint Transition Committees with a high-level joint programme of scoping work agreed politically (refer to Annex 1). This work is essential so that the relevant baseline information is captured (e.g. assets, liabilities, staffing, service delivery standards) to inform future political discussions. It was agreed that this information would be important to inform the planning process and ensure that the transition is managed in an effective and efficient manner and service continuity is maintained throughout.
	The initial officer engagement with Lisburn and Castlereagh had been productive and some progress made in regards to the agreed programme of work. Over recent weeks however, there has been limited engagement from Lisburn and Castlereagh and there has been a cessation to the release of information.
2.3	Belfast City Council officers had compiled an initial asset log identifying those assets from Lisburn and Castlereagh which would fall within the new proposed BCC boundary. A detailed service audit had also been prepared by the Council which identified potential harmonisation issues. Both these pieces of work had been passed to Lisburn/Castlereagh for consideration and input. Again, limited information has been forthcoming to date.

2.4	Furthermore, the next joint meeting of the voluntary Transition Committees was to be arranged by Lisburn/Castlereagh for January 2010 however, despite continuous requests, this has not yet been scheduled.
2.5	Members will note that correspondence, dated 1 <sup>st</sup> February 2010, has been received on behalf of the Transition Committee for Lisburn and Castlereagh requesting a meeting between the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the both voluntary Transition Committees to discuss future engagement. While further clarification has been sought as to the proposed agenda for the meeting, there has been no response received to date.
	<b><u>Transfer of Functions</u></b>
2.6	Transferring function Departments are finalising draft proposals with regard to how functions will transfer to local government and these are to be submitted to the Strategic Leadership Board on 25 <sup>th</sup> February and then issued to councils for consideration. While council officials are assisting with pulling these proposals together, under the auspices of the established Transfer of Functions Working Group, the Council will clearly need to give full consideration to the emerging Departmental proposals and the potential resource implications for Belfast.
2.7	It should be noted that the working assumption of the transfer of function Departments in moving forward is on the basis of an 11 council delivery model which will inevitably result in resources being drawn out of Belfast.
2.8	A detailed report will be submitted to Committee in March outlining the emerging departmental proposals and the implications for the Council.

### **3.0 Resource Implications**

There are no financial or Human Resource implications contained within this report.

### **4.0 Recommendations**

Members are asked to:

- i) note the contents of the foregoing report;
- ii) consider the request received from Lisburn and Castlereagh seeking a meeting between the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of both Transition Committees; and
- iii) note that a detailed report will be submitted to Committee in March setting out the emerging transfer of functions proposals and associated implications for Belfast.

## Lisburn/Castlereagh and Belfast Transition Committee Indicative Programme of Work (Version 2)

<b>RAG KEY:</b>	<b>Delivery on schedule</b>	<b>Delivery likely, however, some minor issues need to be addressed.</b>	<b>Delivery unlikely with immediate correction action required</b>
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	DELIVERABLES	OCT 2009	NOV 2009	DEC 2009	Jan 2010	Feb 2010	Mar 2010	STATUS -RAG-
Governance	1. Consider and agree proposed governance arrangements for taking forward consideration of Transition related issues.	27 <sup>th</sup>						
	2. Agree schedule of joint meetings between Transition Committees	27 <sup>th</sup>						
	3. Agree indicative programme of work	27 <sup>th</sup>						
Scoping and Baseline	4. Agree a process for taking forward joint communications activities; identifying the key milestones in the process, the key messages which need to be conveyed and the proposed methods of delivery. Submit report to Joint Transition Committee for consideration.							
	5. Undertake a service audit and examine potential harmonisation issues and submit report to Joint Transition Committee for consideration.							
	6. Undertake a detailed Asset and Liabilities Audit and submit report to Joint Transition Committee for consideration.							
	7. Examine potential staff transfer issues (taking into account wider discussions and emerging Guidance released by the Local Government Reform Joint Forum) and submit a report to Joint Transition Committee for consideration.							
	8. Examine the potential financial implications (including the impact on the rate) resulting from the proposed boundary changes and identify possible options for how these issues could be addressed. Submit a report to Joint Transition Committee for consideration.							