



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Requirement for Council to respond to the NICS Draft Departmental Spending Plans (2011–12 to 2014-15)
Date:	Friday 4 th February 2010
Reporting Officer:	Peter McNaney, Chief Executive
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Purpose of the report

1. To provide Members with a summary of the issues arising out of the various NICS Departmental Spending Plans 2011–12 to 2014-2015 which could have an impact upon the work of the Council.

NICS Draft Departmental Budget Plans 2011-2012 to 2014-2015

2. The NI Executive has produced a set of draft spending plans for the years 2011-12 to 2014-15 as part of the Budget 2010 process. These spending plans have been presented to the Assembly and are now available for public consultation. The deadline for responding to each of the plans has been extended to the 16th February 2011.

3. It is proposed that the Council respond to each of the spending plans individually. Officers have therefore reviewed each of the plans with a view to highlighting those issues which have the potential to impact upon the work of the Council over the next 4 years and beyond.

Key issues arising out of the NICS Spending Plans

4. Members will be aware that the UK Spending Review announcement on 20th October 2010 presented the Executive with a much reduced funding envelope for the coming four year period. A demand has therefore been placed on Departments to reduce the level of expenditure within their spending plans to ensure that the £4bn budget reduction in real terms over the four year period is achieved.

5. Members will be aware that the implications of this budget include the potential for additional cost to local government, but may also negatively impact on the Council's ability to deliver some of the capital project work currently identified in plans and

programmes.

6. A summary of the issues identified within each of the departmental spending plans is attached at **Appendix 1**. The summary contains a précis of what appears in each budget consultation document and an overview of both the positive and negative implications from each of the spending plans.

Some of the potential key concerns for the Council include:

- Removal of £200m capital allocation for strategic waste infrastructure
- Emergency Planning Grant (reduction £200,000)
- A reduction in DCAL capital funding
- The impact of DEL funding deficit on competitiveness in the city
- No capital provision for exhibition or conference facilities
- No capital funding for the further development of existing business parks
- No specific addition to NITB for 2012 events
- NITB budget to reduce by 17% over the 4 year period
- No allocation for York Street Flyover or Sydenham Bypass widening
- Significant reduction in walking and cycling schemes
- £0.55m reduction in Play Policy Implementation
- DSD budget reductions in neighbourhood renewal
- Lack of clarity around DSD capital spend in Belfast
- Lack of clarity regarding part funded capital projects

7. However the spending plans do contain a number of positive proposals for investment in the city, which provides the Council with opportunities for collaborative working with Departments and Agencies to maximise investment and regeneration.

The most notable capital provision is £110m in the DCAL budget earmarked for substantial upgrades to Windsor Park, Casement Park and Ravenhill.

A further report will be brought to the next meeting of SP&R, detailing a process to create a Resourcing Strategy for the Council, and setting out how this might be used to support the delivery of key projects within the city, identified through the preparation of the Corporate Plan, Masterplan and City Investment Framework.

Council Response / Next Steps

8. Based on the issues raised above, officers have prepared detailed consultation responses to each of the individual departments in respect of their Spending Plans. The draft consultation responses are attached at **Appendix 2**. In addition, Members will be able to raise specific issues with Ministers at upcoming cross party meetings scheduled with DSD, DCAL and OFMDFM.

Recommendation

9. Members are asked to:

- i) note the contents of this report;
- ii) note the comments on each Departmental budget and agree it forms the basis of a response to each Department; and
- iii) note that a further report will be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee setting out a process for developing a Resourcing Strategy which will support the delivery of key projects within the city.