



<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Local Government Lobby with respect to EU Structural Funds for NI Post 2013
<b>Date:</b>	22 March 2013
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<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	Members will be aware, that a report was presented to this Committee in November 2011 regarding the shape of the next EU Programme Period (2014-2020). Following the publication of draft European regulations regarding the purpose and potential delivery mechanisms for the distribution of these funds, Belfast City Council has paved the local government lobby, not only for Belfast but also the 5 surrounding metropolitan Councils.
1.2	The above work resulted in a metropolitan position paper being agreed by each of the Councils of the Metropolitan Area (COMET) namely Belfast, Carrickfergus, Castlereagh, North Down, Newtownabbey and Lisburn. In summary, this document calls for the devolution of EU financial intervention, in a combined structure, to enable the strategic delivery of funding at the local level. It also encourages the Departments to give serious consideration of new models for delivery that are outlined within the draft EU legislation.
1.3	This metropolitan document was used as the basis for a Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) workshop held in February 2013, to which all local authorities were invited to attend and included representation from all Executive Departments and the Special EU Programmes Body. Emerging from this recent event, DFP have requested local authorities to submit a collective position by 28 March 2013.
1.4	Following discussions by the Transfer of Functions Economic Development Sub-Group, it was agreed that Belfast City Council develop this original metropolitan paper further to present the Local Government position, ensuring clear connection to the opportunities presented by the Reform of Local Government,

	transfer of key functions and community planning. The end result is two new lobby papers- a generic one for all 26 Councils to endorse (Appendix 1) and a separate one highlighting the uniqueness and strengths of the metropolitan position (Appendix 2).
1.5	The lobby paper for all 26 Councils was presented to SOLACE on 1 March 2013, and has since been issued to all local authorities by Liam Hannaway for comment.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	Local government has an established role in forming partnerships to take forward various EU programmes, but there is now an opportunity for local government to maximise this role with a devolved responsibility to deliver European funds. This would directly support the delivery of integrated economic development, rural and urban regeneration and employability as part of the Community Plan that will be developed by the 11 councils from 2014/15.
2.2	The attached draft position papers propose that with the Reform of Local Government there is real potential for EU funds to contribute to the delivery of an effective “place based” integrated development plan. In effect using the new 11 Council model and community planning process to enable the delivery of devolved and combined European funds as part of a cocktail of resources to deliver associated programmes and projects at a local level.
2.3	The community plan would therefore form the overarching framework to align central and local government plans. It also notes that while it would be advantageous for one central government department to have responsibility, work is also underway to engage consultants to examine good practice and put forward firm recommendations regarding the development of an integrated accountability and assurance framework which should underpin the future central and local government relationship within NI to ensure greater alignment of government priorities and council delivery plans within a wider community planning process
2.4	Local Government Reform provides a real opportunity to rethink how central and local government can work in a more integrated manner, aligning both policy and resources to address shared investment priorities for our cities, towns and neighbourhoods. There are several benefits to this more integrated approach to delivering key functions and integrating resources locally to shape an area whilst adding value and maximising outcomes in terms of European funding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater ability to align budgets and resources with other mainstream council activities/budgets to support a place-based approach for physical, social and economic regeneration</li> <li>• Further enhance the ability of local government to create the conditions to support economic growth and competitiveness locally</li> <li>• Increased ability to ensure that all areas are able to contribute to and benefit from economic growth and regeneration</li> <li>• Potential for increased investment / access to funding opportunities</li> <li>• Streamlining, integrating and aligning processes for the benefit of customers</li> <li>• Greater ability to adapt to local circumstances and priorities</li> <li>• Improved connectedness between the local, regional and European</li> </ul>

	<p>priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced involvement of individuals and communities in the design, delivery and evaluation of services through a community planning approach</li> </ul>
2.5	<p>The paper requests the support of the NI Executive (principally through DFP, DETI, DEL and DARD) for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Government to have delegated authority for the delivery of European Structural Funds, using a Community Plan led approach in the period 2014-2020;</li> <li>Council areas to be designated ITI or CLLD status or a combination of these to enable local authorities to deliver European funding to support the delivery of community plans and area based investment</li> </ul>

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	Staff implications within European Unit to maintain the local government lobby relating to the 2014-2020 EU Programme period

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	There are no Equality and Good Relations considerations attached to this report.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	Members note the content of the report and agree to the submission of the attached papers to DFP.

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
There is no decision tracking attached to this report.	

<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
<p>CLLD- Community-led Local Development  COMET - Councils of the Metropolitan Area  DARD – Department of Agriculture and Rural Development  DEL – Department for Employment and Learning  DETI – Department of Enterprise Trade and Industry  DFP – Department of Finance and Personnel  ITI – Integrated Territorial Investment</p>	

<b>8</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
<p>Appendix 1- Local government lobby paper relating EU Structural Funds delivery 2014-2020</p> <p>Appendix 2 – COMET lobby paper relating EU Structural Funds delivery 2014-2020</p>	