



## Belfast City Council (Shadow)

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>Shadow Strategic Policy &amp; Resources Committee</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Transfer of Planning: Response to Finance Proposal Paper</b>
<b>Date:</b>	26 <sup>th</sup> September, 2014
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance & Resources (ext. 6184) John McGrillen, Director of Development (ext. 3470)
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Eve Bremner, Programme Manager (ext. 3275)

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Background Information</b>
1.1	Members are aware under the Local Government Reform Programme planning powers will transfer from DOE to Council on 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2015. As part of the ongoing process to plan for the transfer the DoE have issued a consultation paper on the proposed resources and associated budget for the transfer of the planning function. The consultation document and covering letter was issued with closing date for comments of 3 <sup>rd</sup> October 2014 (see Appendix 1).
1.2	The Council is continuing to work with DoE to clarify the direct operation and associated costs of transferring planning functions. To assist this work the Regional Transition Operational Board (RTOB) commissioned Deloitte to conduct a due diligence to inform the transfer of functions process focussing on the current position and provisions. This due diligence assessment took account of the following principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The transfer of functions and powers will be rates neutral to local government as a whole, at the point of transfer.</li><li>• Funding will be provided by Central Government for notional costs where it is anticipated these will become fixed charges for the new Councils.</li></ul>
1.3	Internal consultation and engagement with the local Belfast Planning Office has been carried out as part of the process to develop the response to this consultation.

<b>2.0</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	There are a number of issues raised in the detail within the consultation documents that require clarification and areas for which there is insufficient information on which to assess the potential implications for the Council from a resource and finance perspective. The draft response set out in Appendix 2 details proposed comments for submission to the DoE.
2.2	The main issues relate to:

2.3	<p>a) requirements for further detail in respect of the tabulated information and the basis for the projected figures in order that the Council can complete an effective due diligence process as the basis for future estimating and budget setting.</p> <p>b) concerns that some of the proposed resource provisions, particularly to support aspects such as Development Planning and Legal Services, are insufficient for the reformed system the new Council will have to operate. Development planning is likely to be a costly process for the city of Belfast in the development phases.</p> <p>c) approaches to the allocation of resources and some costs does not reflect the particular complexities likely to be experienced by Belfast.</p> <p>d) proposals for a significant staffing team to be retained by the Department have not been explained or justified in the context of significantly decreased provision of staffing resources for the Council based offices.</p> <p>e) forecast of the longer-term resource implications associated with the transferring function do not appear to reflect need for growth .</p> <p>f) how specialised activities such as habitats and environmental assessments are to be dealt with and the financial implications of these.</p> <p>The detailed Draft response is set out in Appendix 2 for consideration as the basis for a response to the Department.</p>
-----	---

<b>3.0</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	The attached paper, in combination with the Deloitte work and ongoing due diligence, will be used to inform this estimating / budget setting processes which will be brought to the Committee as part of the overall revenue estimates process.

<b>4.0</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Implications</b>
4.1	There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this report.

<b>5.0</b>	<b>Call In</b>
5.1	Members are advised that any decision relating to the final protocol or governance of the committee would be subject to Call In.

<b>6.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
6.1	It is recommended that Members consider and if appropriate support the submission to the DoE of the Draft response set out in Appendix 2.

<b>7.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
Appendix 1 - DOE Finance Proposal Paper Appendix 2 - Draft response to Transfer of Planning Finance Proposal Paper	