



## Belfast District Council (Shadow)

<b>Report to:</b>	Shadow Strategic Policy & Resources
<b>Subject:</b>	Regeneration and Housing Bill
<b>Date:</b>	26 September 2014
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive, ext.6002
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<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	<p>As Members are aware, the transfer of regeneration and community development powers from DSD to Councils is one of the most important and transformative aspects of local government reform. Whilst local government reform is being delivered through the Local Government Act, the legal instrument for the transfer of regeneration and community development powers is intended to be through a Regeneration and Housing Bill. The NI Executive has yet to consider this Bill.</p> <p>In answer to an oral Assembly Question on the 9<sup>th</sup> September, the Minister for Social Development, Nelson McCausland MLA, indicated that he has “sought Executive approval to introduce the Regeneration and Housing Bill in the Assembly on a number of occasions” but that Executive approval has not yet been given for the Bill to proceed. The timescale for the Bill to make its way through the necessary Assembly stages in time for the transfer of regeneration powers to take place in April 2015 is now extremely challenging.</p>

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<p>Delay in the passage of the Regeneration and Housing Bill has the potential to impact a wide range of functions, budgets and assets including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Transfer of 211 assets &amp; liabilities, to include the Lagan Weir, Custom House Square; development sites; and public art;</li><li>○ £14.7m of grants;</li><li>○ Masterplans and strategic projects;</li><li>○ Public realm and environmental improvement schemes;</li><li>○ Operational responsibility for regulating HMOs; and</li><li>○ Staff and Staffing budgets</li></ul> <p>In particular, the delay in the passage of the Bill and consequent delay in the transfer</p>

	<p>of powers and resources would have the following consequences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Adverse impact on community planning</b> – regeneration and community development are key to the successful implementation of community planning, particularly at a local level. Members’ desire to see an integrated, outcomes-focused approach would be constrained, with policies, resources and governance remaining fragmented;</li> <li>• The <b>continued separation of local development planning (spatial planning) and regeneration will work against the creation of truly strategic “one-city” development and regeneration plans.</b> The Council will not have the opportunity to present a coherent “Belfast Agenda” to drive growth, attract investment and improve quality of life. Ability to implement the city centre regeneration and investment framework will be significantly constrained.</li> <li>• The <b>development scheme and land assembly powers</b> are essential to the Council playing a full role in and maximising the benefit of regeneration schemes;</li> <li>• The transfer of powers and resources in respect of <b>neighbourhood renewal</b> is essential to ensure the <b>full transformation of this programme by 2017</b>, as Members had intended;</li> <li>• The <b>absence of a budget for physical projects</b> will mean that programmes such as the Belfast Investment Fund, LIF, SIF and others will <b>continue as separate programmes, thereby losing the opportunity to maximise the impact of these combined resources for local people and for city development.</b> The opportunity to create an integrated, strategic physical development programme for the city, linked to an agreed set of outcomes will be significantly constrained.</li> <li>• Transfer of resources would have provided an important <b>opportunity to maximise the potential to draw down ESF funding for a strategic programme of support for the long-term unemployed.</b></li> <li>• The Council’s <b>ability to regulate HMO’s</b> will be lost at a time when housing pressure will increase;</li> <li>• Resources transferring had been factored into the consideration of future staffing levels for the new Council and the consolidation of a number of posts.</li> </ul> <p>Given the significance of the potential impacts of a delay in the transfer of powers and resources, the Committee is asked to consider the most effective way of engaging the Executive on this issue.</p>
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<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	Delay in the transfer of regeneration, housing and community development powers to Council will have significant resource implications.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	Equality and Good Relations impacts will be considered as this issue emerges.

<b>5</b>	<b>Call In</b>
5.1	Subject to call in.

<b>6</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
6.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Note the update on the Regeneration and Housing Bill;</li><li>• Consider the most effective way of engaging the Executive on this issue.</li></ul>

<b>7</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
Chief Executive to provide on-going updates to Committee.	

<b>8</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>