



Belfast City Council

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Report to: | Strategic Policy and Resources Committee |
| Subject: | Review of Public Administration Update |
| Date: | 22 February 2008 |
| Reporting Officer: | Peter McNaney, Chief Executive |
| Contact Officer: | Kevin Heaney, ext 6202 |

Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 Members will recall from the report which was brought to Committee last month that the Northern Ireland Executive were to consider a final RPA recommendations report at the Executive meeting on 31 January 2008. This report was to address the key issues of numbers of Councils, functions of Councils, timescale for implementation, severance arrangements, modernisation / capacity building, and functional and transitional arrangements.
- 1.2 The Committee was also informed that the Department of the Environment had applied for £30million modernisation funding in the draft budget and decisions would be made shortly by the Department of Finance and Personnel how much funding might be available. Members also endorsed the approach that the Council should start to develop a dialogue with Departments on the development of pilot transitional arrangements and capacity building programmes for a number of functional areas which may transfer.

Current Position

- 2.1 The Northern Ireland Executive did not consider the RPA findings paper at their meeting on 31 January. It was rescheduled for consideration on 13 February but was not considered at that meeting as there was no political agreement on numbers. The Department now expects that the matter will be considered at the Executive meeting on 28 February.
- 2.2 Latest intelligence indicates that serious consideration is being given to the eleven Council model but no firm decision has been taken.
- 2.3 In the budget which was announced by the Minister of Finance and Personnel no provision was made for the £30million modernisation funding to build the capacity of local government. However the Local Government Branch of the Department of the Environment has now commissioned Deloitte to prepare a strategic outline case for modernisation funding and Deloitte are presently seeking information on

current capacity from Councils. The indication is that depending on the case put forward modernisation funding may be found from in-year monitoring money. It is important that the Council participates in this process and puts forward proposals on how joint initiatives might be developed to build capacity and joint working before functions formally transfer.

2.4 The timetable for implementation remains 2011. However unless the Northern Ireland Executive report is agreed by Easter it is likely that this timetable will slip. This will have implications on whether there are elections in 2009 and the term that Councils will work as a result of these.

Recommendations

3.1 The Committee is asked to note the updated position.