



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	NI Assembly Liaison/update
Date:	Friday 15 th February 2008
Reporting Officer:	Peter McNaney, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Ms Sarah Molloy, Policy Analyst (ext 2559)

Relevant Background Information

This report is being brought on a monthly basis to Strategic P&R as agreed at August 2007 meeting. It provides contact and update information on the work of the Assembly to assist Members liaise with, and influence the work of, the Assembly and ensure that the interests of the city of Belfast are most effectively represented.

Key Issues

1. Belfast City Council guide to the Assembly

An updated version of this guide is available on the Members' portal.

2. Official liaison with the Assembly

In order to ensure that the Council is aligned in its approach and liaison with the Assembly, it was agreed that Assembly/Ministerial updates are added as a standing item to the agenda of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee and the appropriate Committees of the Council.

3. Update on Assembly business

Updates/changes to final Budget 2008-11

An additional £20m, £30m and £30m over the next three years has become available. This additional funding appears to have come from potential asset realisation identified by the capital realisation task force which has identified. They have identified "the potentially significant value that is to be released from assets over the next 10 years, which is in the region of £900 million" and identified "a range of potential opportunities to reinvest the proceeds of up to £295 million of asset disposals over the next three years of the Budget period".

Departmental Budgets

- £10m for mental health (however not ringfenced)
- £3m, £5m and £5m for children and youth services – but not the reinstatement of the Children's Fund
- £2m to DCAL for arts funding
- £1m, £2m and £3m for victims

Capital spending

- £70m, £75m and £60m for social housing
- £14m over three years for Fire and Rescue
- £40m for DRD - A6 Randalstown to Castledawson dualling scheme, improvements to the A32 route from Omagh to Enniskillen, the A2 at Broadbridge and Greenisland, and the A32 Cherrymount Link Road scheme in Enniskillen.

Other

- No extra funding for youth services
- No funding for Shared Future
- No funding for older people
- No funding for implementation of local government strand of RPA

Minister for Finance outlined details of innovation spending in different departments.

Programme for Government

- £400m additional funding for social and affordable housing
- £140m additional funding for DHSSPS
- Water charges not addressed in new document
- No mention of costs of replacing 11+
- Provision of affordable, quality childcare mentioned

Single Library Authority/Libraries Bill

Members of the Arts, Culture and Leisure Committee were given an outline of the structure of the new Single Library Authority.

Rapid Transport for Belfast

Minister for Regional Development answered on 28 Jan that a feasibility studies were nearing completion and he expected to receive a report within days.

Varney Review

Minister for Finance is in the process of agreeing a Varney II report which will provide an objective assessment of what our economy needs by way of development policies and programmes. This review will influence the new Regional Economic Strategy. The terms of reference of this review were provided to Members of the Enterprise Trade and Investment Committee.

Older People's Commissioner

It was announced on the 18th December that OFMDFM was to create a Northern Ireland Commissioner for Older People. The remit of the Commissioner was not stated.

Children and Young People

A sub-committee on children and young people is to be re-established.

Nuclear energy

Media reports that the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee is to look at the possibility of nuclear power in Northern Ireland were denied by the Committee Deputy Chairperson saying the Committee is simply doing some scoping work into energy issues.

Multi-Sports Stadium

No update.

Multiple mandates

No update.

Resource Implications

<u>Financial</u>

No financial implications

<u>Human Resources</u>

No HR implications

<u>Asset and Other Implications</u>

No asset or other implications

Recommendations

It is recommended that Members note the contents of the above report.

Key to Abbreviations

N/A

Documents Attached

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