



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources (Transition) Committee
Subject:	RPA: Transfer of Functions Update
Date:	Friday 9 th October, 2009
Reporting Officer:	Peter McNaney, Chief Executive
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1.0	<u>Relevant Background Information</u>
1.1	Members will be aware that an RPA Transfer of Functions (ToF) Working Group was established to examine the package of functions proposed to transfer from central to local government and provide greater clarity in terms of the scope of the transferring functions; the resources (or otherwise) attached to the functions; and to identify those issues which needed to be addressed or required further clarification prior to transfer. The ToF Working Group was chaired by the Chief Executive of Belfast City Council, with senior officials from both central and local government.
1.4	As part of the discussions of the ToF Working Group consideration was given to potential proposals in regard to marginal changes to the transferring functions where this was justified on a service delivery basis and taking into account the principles of strong local government; the role of local government in supporting place shaping; the need for single point accountability at the local level; ensuring improved customer centric services; and value for money considerations.
1.5	The work of the ToF Working Group culminated in a series of recommendations on proposed marginal changes being put forward for consideration by the Environment Minister and Ministers represented on the Local Government Reform Executive Sub-Committee.
2.0	<u>Key Issues</u>
2.1	The Executive Sub-Committee met on 15 th September to discuss the recommendations put forward by the ToF Working Group and had agreed to the final suite of functions to transfer from central to local government as part of the RPA reform process.
2.2	Attached at Appendix 1 is correspondence issued by the Environment Minister, Edwin Poots to the President of NILGA, Councillor John Mathews, setting out a brief summary of what had been agreed at the Executive Sub-Committee on 15 th September in regards to the transfer of functions and the associated issues around transfer of staff, securing funding and taking forward community planning.
2.3	<u>Transfer of Functions</u> In terms of the transfer of functions to local government, the Environment Minister has confirmed that: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Minister Connor Murphy has accepted local government's proposal that the following public realm functions should transfer:-pedestrian permits, alley gating, permitting local events on roads, off street car parking and on street car parking enforcement.▪ Minister Connor Murphy has confirmed also that he is content for his Department to retain the following functions which local government advocated should not transfer:- maintenance of amenity areas, salting of footways, grass cutting/weed spraying, gully emptying and street lighting)▪ Minister Margaret Ritchie has accepted the local government proposal that "Living Over the Shop" grant scheme should transfer; and▪ Minister Margaret Ritchie has not accepted the sector's recommendations that Travellers' Transit Sites function should remain with the NIHE and will transfer to local government. Further detail on the final decisions in regard to the transfer of functions is set out at Appendix 1.
2.4	It has been agreed that the ToF Working Group would to be reconstituted and chaired by the Chief Executive. It will be tasked with examining and providing clarity on the detail of the revised suite of functions transferring to local government. As this detail emerges, further reports will be submitted for the

	consideration of the Committee.
2.5	Notwithstanding. It will be important that the Council now start to enhance its level of engagement with transferring departments to explore the potential options around the transfer of functions to Belfast City Council and the associated consequences which need to be considered by the Council's Transition Committee (i.e. SP&R).
	<u>Community Planning</u>
2.6	In his correspondence, the Environment Minister reaffirmed that the Executive Sub-Committee members do appreciate the importance of community planning and have expressed their full support to the required engagement between central and local government as the implementation of the programme is taken forward. The Minister stated also that he intends to write to all other Ministerial colleagues seeking their commitment to this engagement process.
2.7	This should be clearly welcomed as one of the key successes to the Community Planning process will be its ability to secure greater coherence and integration in delivery and providing responsive and value for money public services.
	<u>Transfer of Staff</u>
2.8	Reference is also made in the correspondence to possible models for the transfer of staff from central to local government. Transfer of staffing issues will be subject to consideration by the Local Government Reform Joint Forum which comprises of representatives from central and local government and trade unions. The Chair of the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee and Head of Human Resources are both members of the Joint Forum. Again, as proposals emerge from the work of the Joint Forum they will be brought to Committee for consideration.
	<u>Financial Challenges</u>
2.9	Clearly there remains serious uncertainties around the future funding of the transferring functions which is further compounded by the fact that a range of functions remain subject to a bidding process as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review and the wider recession and fiscal challenges which will inevitably result in overall cuts in public sector expenditure and greater efficiencies targets being set.
2.10	The Chief Executive recently delivered a presentation at a joint NILGA and SOLACE RPA briefing session on 2 nd October which examined some of the financial and implementation issues which local government face in moving forward with the RPA (copy of presentation attached at Appendix 2). The Chief Executive will discuss this further at the Committee meeting.

4.0 Resource Implications

There are no Human Resource or financial implications contained within this report

5.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

Documents Attached

Appendix 1	Correspondence issued by the Environment Minister, Edwin Poots in regard to the RPA
Appendix 2	Presentation