



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources (Transition) Committee
Subject:	RPA – Transfer of Functions
Date:	19 th March 2010
Reporting Officer:	Peter McNaney, Chief Executive
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1.0	<u>Relevant Background Information</u>
1.1	Members will be aware that detailed discussions have been ongoing between central and local government officials, under the auspices of the Transfer of Functions Working Group, regarding the transfer of functions (refer to Appendix 1 for summary of functions) to councils as a result of the RPA and the associated operational and financial implications.
1.2	The Transfer of Functions Working Group was established to provide greater clarity in terms of the scope of the functions to transfer and the associated resources (where known). The Working Group comprises of senior officials from both transferring function Departments and local government including Belfast City Council with the Chief Executive as Chair of the group.
2.0	<u>Key Issues</u>
2.1	<p>While constructive engagement has taken place over recent months, there still remains the need for detailed work and negotiation required on a range of issues, particularly pertaining to funding. Discussions on transferring functions cannot be progressed in isolation from crucial decisions yet to be finalised on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Establishing the true costs of the transferring functions ii) How to ensure there is no adverse impact on the rate base at point of transfer iii) Timetable for the transfer of functions iv) Confirmation on how services will transfer to local government on Day1 v) Future sustainability of funding for transferring functions and CSR process vi) The disaggregation of funding and resources vii) Confirmation of transferring staff numbers and grades where possible
2.2	In the absence of any firm decisions and clarity regarding each of the aforementioned issues it will be impossible for local government and Transition Committees to undertake any due diligence review of the potential resource implications resulting from the transfer of functions and enable them to consider within the context of the incoming financial planning cycle for 2011/2012.
2.3	A number of these issues will undoubtedly be considered and negotiated at a regional level and set the broad parameters/framework for the transferring functions and any consideration given to potential service delivery models. The Council will ensure that it remains centrally involved in such discussions.

2.5	<p>Transferring function Departments are finalising draft proposals with regard to how functions will transfer to local government and it should be noted that the following working assumptions seem to be emerging:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) transfer will be on the basis of an 11 council delivery model which will inevitably result in resources being drawn out of Belfast. ii) funding will be transferred on the basis of grant aid for initial 3 years which will bring with it some form of centralised scrutiny/oversight <p>The Council will clearly need to give full consideration to the emerging Departmental proposals and the potential resource implications for Belfast.</p>
2.6	<p>In addition, detailed design work is now needed to develop worked through options as to how the transferring functions may transfer and be assimilated within councils. At the recent Strategic Leadership Board meeting on 25th February 2010, it was agreed that a Task & Finish group would be established to take forward design work at a regional level. Again, the Council will be directly involved in this work</p>
2.7	<p>It should be noted that the proposed design work to be taken forward at a regional level should not be prescriptive in nature and the Council will retain its own autonomy to establish how the transferring functions will be integrated and delivered. Council officials are continuing to engage with transferring functions departmental officials (e.g. DSD, DRD Roads, DoE Planning) to examine what is proposed to transfer to the BCC.</p>
2.8	<p>In order to enable Members to be fully updated on the ongoing discussions in regards to the Transfer of Functions and any potential implications for the Council, it is suggested that a Special Meeting of the Committee be held.</p>

<p>4.0 Resource Implications</p>
<p>There are no Human Resource or financial implications contained within this report</p>

<p>5.0 Recommendations</p>
<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) note the contents of this report and the appendices attached; and b) agree that a Special Meeting of the Committee be held.

<p>6.0 Appendices</p>
<p>Appendix 1: Summary of functions transferring to local government</p>