



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Filling of Casual Vacancies on District Councils
Date:	23rd April, 2010
Reporting Officer:	Mr Liam Steele, Head of Committee and Members' Services (Extension 6325)
Contact Officer:	Mr Liam Steele, Head of Committee and Members' Services (Extension 6325)

Relevant Background Information

On 20th November, 2009 the Committee responded to a consultation paper entitled "Filling Casual Vacancies on District Councils" which had been issued by the Northern Ireland Office.

The consultation paper had sought to examine proposals for reforming the process used currently in Northern Ireland for the filling of casual vacancies arising on District Councils.

Key Issues

Following the consultation process, the legislation governing the filling of casual vacancies on District Councils in Northern Ireland has been amended by the introduction of the "Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962 (Amendment) Order 2010", which provides that vacancies arising on or after 1st April, 2010 will be filled by Party nomination, thus avoiding the need for the holding of Bye-Elections. This will mean that when a letter of resignation from a Councillor is received by the Chief Executive, he will advise the Chief Electoral Officer, who will then contact the appropriate Party Nominating Officer to request that a replacement be nominated.

While there is no role for the Council to play in this process, it will be important to set out for Members' information the process which will apply in the future.

I would suggest that the following procedure be adopted:

When a letter of resignation from a Member of Council is received by the Chief Executive, he shall, within 24 hours, write to both the Chief Electoral Officer and the other Members of Council advising of the vacancy which has arisen.

When the Chief Electoral Officer has obtained from the appropriate Nominating Officer the name of the replacement Councillor and has advised the Chief Executive of the Council, the Chief Executive shall, again within 24 hours, notify in writing the remaining Members of Council and appropriate Council officers of the name of the replacement.

The replacement Councillor will fill the places left vacant on the Committees on which the departing Councillor had been a Member. If any change in Committee membership is required, this can be reported to and dealt with by the Council at any subsequent meeting.

Resource Implications

None.

Recommendation

To note the introduction from 1st April, 2010 of the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962 (Amendment) Order 2010 and to approve the process which will be applied to the filling of casual vacancies in the future.
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Decision Tracking

Not applicable.
