



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Review of Public Administration Update
Date:	24 th September 2010
Reporting Officer:	Ciaran Quigley, Assistant Chief Executive Gerry Millar, Director of Property and Projects
Contact Officer:	Kevin Heaney (ext. 6202)
1.0	<u>Relevant Background Information</u>
1.1	Members will be aware of the ongoing discussions within the NI Executive in regards to the Review of Public Administration and how the reform of local government within Northern Ireland will be progressed. At present there remains significant uncertainty in respect to the future of the RPA and the associated implementation timetable.
1.2	Despite such uncertainty the local government sector has recognised the need to maintain momentum and seek to develop its own proposals in respect of an 'improvement, collaboration and efficiency' programme for local government. The intention would be to support councils in delivering more efficient and value for money services to the citizen. Such work is particularly important, given the current financial pressures facing local government and wider public sector.
2.0	<u>Key Issues</u>
2.1	<i>Meeting with DoE Minister</i>
2.1.1	A delegation from NILGA and SOLACE recently meet with the Environment Minister, Edwin Poots on 15 th September 2010, to discuss the proposed next steps in respect to the RPA. It is understood that the Minister intends to submit an options paper for the consideration of the NI Executive in October 2010.
2.2	<i>Update on improvement, collaboration and efficiency work</i>
2.2.1	At the meeting on 15 th September, the Environment Minister was provided with an update on the ongoing local government lead work on developing proposals for an improvement, collaboration and efficiency (ICE) programme. An update report which had been provided to the Minister is attached at Appendix 1 for information.
2.2.2	Members will note from the report attached that exploratory work is ongoing to examine and identify potential collaborative opportunities on a local, sub-regional and regional level, which may support service improvement or drive out efficiencies in delivery. Areas currently under consideration include, for example, procurement; information systems; Human Resources; asset management; finance and customer facing services.
2.2.3	BCC officers are involved in this scoping work in line with the Committee's previous decision that the Council engage with potential partners to explore collaborative opportunities and to ensure that these are considered within the context of the Council's own efficiency programme.

2.2.4	It would be intended that this work will culminate in the development of an over-arching business case for local government which sets out potential opportunities and undertakes a cost-benefit analysis. Members will be kept fully informed as this work progresses and, in particular, of any potential opportunities which may emerge.
2.3	Legislation
2.3.1	The Council has recently received correspondence (copy attached at Appendix 2) from the Department for Regional Development, dated 14 th September, informing the Council that the draft Roads (Functions of District Councils) Bill will be withdrawn from the NI Executive legislative programme.
2.3.2	The Council had previously responded to the consultation exercise on the draft Bill (a copy of the relevant Committee report attached at Appendix 3) which aimed to transfer certain roads related function, currently carried out by DRD Roads Service, to the proposed new 11 councils following the implementation of the Review of Public Administration.
2.3.3	The correspondence received states that given the fact that it will not now be possible to create the envisaged new council structure by 2011 as planned, the DRD Minister has decided that it would be impractical to consider transferring the functions contained in the Bill to the existing 26 councils.
2.3.4	In these circumstances, it is suggested that the Committee may wish to consider writing to the DRD Minister and Department seeking discussions in respect to further strengthening the relationship between the Roads Service and Council.
2.4	Transfer of Functions A Transfer of Functions paper, suggesting that a number of voluntary integrated area based pilots be investigated which bring together regeneration, planning and community development, is being prepared and a further report will be brought to Committee in October.

3.0 Resource Implications

There are no significant resource implications contained within this report.

4.0 Recommendations

Members are asked to note the contents of this report and consider whether it would be appropriate to write to the DRD Minister seeking discussions in respect to further strengthening the relationship between the Roads Service and Council.

5.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: Update on Local Government 'Improvement, Efficiency and Improvement' programme

Appendix 2: Correspondence received from DRD Roads Service

Appendix 3: BCC response to the draft Roads (Transfer of Functions) to District Councils Bill