



Item No:

Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Review of Public Administration – Transferring Functions Update
Date:	22 nd October 2010
Reporting Officer:	Peter McNaney, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Kevin Heaney (ext. 6202)

1.0	<u>Relevant Background Information</u>
1.1	Members will be aware that as part of the Review of Public Administration (RPA) process, that a Transfer of Functions Working Group had been established comprising of senior officials from both central and local government and chaired by the Chief Executive of Belfast City Council. Its purpose was to examine the package of functions proposed to transfer from central to local government and to provide greater clarity in terms of the scope of the transferring functions; the resources (or otherwise) attached to the functions; and to examine those operational (practical) issues which needed to be addressed prior to transfer.
2.0	<u>Key Issues</u>
2.1	This work had cumulated in the development of a suite of initial draft baseline report which gave detailed consideration to those issues relating to each of the transferring function areas (e.g. DoE Planning, DSD etc). A copy of the baseline report is attached at Appendix 1 . Members will note that that are a number of critical issues, particularly relating to resources, which would have to be resolved in advance of any formal transfer of functions.
2.2	The recent deferral of a decision by the NI Executive on 14 th June 2010 in respect to the future of the RPA and the subsequent decision to hold elections to 26 and not 11 councils in May 2011 has further reinforced the uncertainty in regards to transferring functions.
2.3	There is clearly a need for a continued political conversation in respect to any future prospect of transferring functions, the scope of such transfer and the operational and financial implications for councils. As part of its deliberations on the future of local government reform, it will be important that the NI Executive reaffirms its commitment (or otherwise) to the transfer of functions from central to local government and provides clarification on the proposed timetable for implementation.
2.4	Given the current economic climate, the pending departmental budgetary cuts and growing pressures on the public sector to do more with less, there is an opportunity to reconfigure the conversation with central government departments to focus on the need for and benefits off service integration at the local level. There is a need to explore the potential scope for greater co-design and co-delivery of services.
2.5	In an attempt to initiate and/or inform such discussions, the Transfer of Functions Working Group has prepared a platform report (copy attached at Appendix 1) which provides an update on discussions to date, outlines the key outstanding issues which still need to be addressed and presents a case for the need for greater service integration. The report also recommends that consideration be given to the initiation of a number of integrated area-based pilots which would bring together, for example, regeneration, planning, community development, economic development. Such an approach would go towards strengthening the relationship between central and local government and could offer a managed response to dealing with the budgetary pressures facing the entire public sector whilst limiting the impact on services.

Comment [h1]: Should this level of detail be provided or would the transfer of functions platform cover report be suffice – see para.2.5 below?

2.6	It would be the intention that the Transfer of Functions report (subject to any proposed revisions by Members) would be submitted to the Environment Minister with a view to securing Ministerial support for the initiation of a number of integrated area-based pilots.
2.7	Notwithstanding, the Council will need to continue to engage at both a political and officer level with relevant central government departments and Ministers in regards to the transfer of functions issue and to explore the potential for integrated area-based pilots or partnership projects in advance of any formal transfer. Members may also wish to consider discussing with Party and Ministerial colleagues the potential for Belfast to take forward area pilots. The Council has already successfully established integrated service delivery models in the areas of, for example, health and community safety. Any consideration given to potential area-based pilots would need to be integrated with the Council's approach to community planning.

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

4.0 Recommendations	
<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) note the contents of this report ii) support the proposal that the Council advocate for the potential initiation of integrated area-based pilots and that Members lobby for a Belfast pilot; and iii) agree that the attached report be submitted to the Environment Minister, subject to any revisions proposed by Members 	

5.0 Documents Attached	
Appendix 1	Transfer of Functions Working Group report