



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Reporting of Working Group Minutes in the Minute Book
Date:	18th November, 2011
Reporting Officer:	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (ext 6314)
Contact Officer:	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (ext 6314)

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	At the Council meeting on 1st November a number of Members made mention of the fact that the minutes of several Working Groups were only mentioned in passing in the minutes of the controlling Standing Committee. In particular, attention was drawn to the adoption of the minutes of the meetings of the Budget and Transformation Panel and the Historic Centenaries Working Group by the Committee on 21st October.
1.2	The Chief Executive undertook to have a report presented to the Committee setting out options with regard to the how the minutes of Working Groups should be dealt with both at the Standing Committees and, subsequently, within the Council Minute Book.

2	Key Issues
	<u>Access to Information for Members</u>
2.1	All Members of Council have access to the Modern.Gov system without restriction and can already view both the agenda papers and minutes of all Committees and Working Groups whether or not they are a member of that Committee or Working Group. All Committee reports and associated appendices are therefore already available to all Members.

	<p><u>Monthly Minute Book</u></p>
2.2	<p>At present, only the minutes of the meetings of the Council's Standing Committees are included in the minute book presented at the monthly Council meeting. The reason for this is that it is only those Committees which can make decisions (subject to Council ratification). Working Groups have no standing under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972. The decision to establish a number of Working Groups in 2008 was taken in order to allow the preliminary work on a range of issues to be discussed by all party groups and for those Working Groups to make recommendations to the controlling Standing Committees. If the minutes of a Working Group are adopted by the controlling Standing Committee then, normally, that is all that the minute will show. If, however, any of the recommendations of a Working Group are amended or rejected by the controlling Committee then that is recorded separately within the minute of the controlling Committee.</p>
2.3	<p>If the minutes of a controlling Committee only records that the minutes of a Working Group which were submitted to it were "adopted" then it is accepted that this does not reflect fully the discussions undertaken and recommendations agreed at the Working Group meeting. Although the full minutes of those Working Groups are available to all Members through the Modern.Gov system, they are not readily available to Members at the monthly meeting.</p>
2.4	<p>A way in which this could be resolved is to include a more comprehensive record within the Standing Committee minute of the recommendations of the Working Groups which report to it. For example, when the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee is considering the minutes of the Good Relations Partnership, the minute of the meeting would record the important individual decisions which were taken by the adoption of the Partnership's minute. This would highlight the individual issues which the Working Groups discussed and allow the full Council meeting to discuss them in more detail.</p>

3	Resource Implications
	None.

4	Equality and Good Relations Implications
	None.

5	Recommendations
5.1	<p>The Committee is requested to agree that, in future, the important individual recommendations which are made by Working Groups are included within the minutes of the appropriate Standing Committee.</p>

6	Decision Tracking
Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager	
December, 2011	