



<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Local Government Reform (RPA) – Update
<b>Date:</b>	8 June 2012
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Peter McNaney, Chief Executive
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources (Ext. 6184) Kevin Heaney (Ext. 6202)

**1.0 Relevant Background Information**

1.1 Since the last update provided to the Committee in May 2012, there has been a number of further developments in regards to the Local Government reform process, as outlined below, which Members should be made aware of.

**2.0 Key Issues**

**2.1 Reform Implementation Structures**

2.1.1 The Environment Minister, Alex Attwood is pushing ahead and putting in place necessary governance and implementation structures to take forward the local government reform process including:

- **Regional Transition Committee** - a political forum representing the 11 new councils (including the Chair of SP&R) and supported by CX advisors (including the Chief Executive)
- **Regional Transition Operational Board** - acting in a programme management board capacity and comprising senior central and local government officials including the Chief Executive. The inaugural meeting of this group took place on 24 May 2012. Whilst DoE will issue an official minute of the meeting, which will be circulated to Members, an internal note of discussions is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- **Task & Finish Working Groups** – nine established to take forward specific operational workstreams. DoE has recently written to all councils setting out the high-level remit for each of the Working Groups, outlining initial proposals on membership and seeking any additional nominees from councils (see **Appendix 2**). Clearly it will be important that the Council is engaged in these operational groups and inform the work as it is taken forward. The groups and proposed BCC officer nominations are set out below

DoE Task & Finish Working Group	Proposed Chair	BCC Led Officer
1. Transfer of Functions	Peter McNaney, CX Belfast (Chair)	Peter McNaney, Chief Executive
2. Human Resources	Linda MacHugh Director of Local Government Policy, DoE	Jill Minne, Head of HR
3. Finance	Ian Maye, DoE Deputy Secretary, planning and Local Government	Ronan Cregan, Director Finance & Resources
4. Legislation	Angus Kerr, Planning Policy, DoE	Ciaran Quigley, Town Solicitor & Assistant Chief Executive
5. Pilots & Community Planning	Anne Donaghy (CX Ballymena)	Suzanne Wylie, Director of H&ES
6. Delivery Programme	Linda MacHugh, Director of Local Government Policy, DoE	Ronan Cregan, Director Finance & Resources
7. Communications	Teresa Donaldson (CX Craigavon)	Eamon Deeny, Head of Corporate Communications

	8. Systems Convergence	Liam Flannigan (CX Limavady)	Paul Gribben, Head of ISB
	9. LG Reform Joint Forum	Paul O'Brien, APSE	Head of HR
2.1.2	Each of the working Groups have been asked to initially consider and scope the range of issues which need to be progressed and to develop a work programme to delivering these. The Committee will be kept fully informed as this work the groups evolves and any associated implications for Belfast City Council; with Members direction sought as appropriate. Members will note that a detailed work programme setting out the Councils approach to delivering local government reform will be submitted for consideration and the next Committee meeting on 22 June.		
2.2	<b>Legislation</b>		
2.2.1	<b>Statutory Transition Committees:</b> It is understood that the Environment Minister has asked officials to explore the options available to fast-tracked legislation which will bring effect to 'Statutory' Transition in Autumn this year instead of delaying until April 2013 as initially intended. Having a statutory footing would enable Transition Committees to progress important convergence issues within their respective council clusters linked to a clear programme of work. This is more of significance to those council clusters who may not be fully engaged at present.		
2.2.2	In terms of the Belfast 'Statutory' Transition Committee, there will be representation from Lisburn and Castlereagh albeit this will reflect the areas to transfer to Belfast. As previously instructed by the Committee, correspondence has been issued to Lisburn and Castlereagh outlining the Council's desire to engage at an early stage in discussions regarding a number of important transition issues.		
2.3	<b>Funding Reform</b>		
2.3.1	It is understood that the Environment Minister is currently considering submitting a bid as part of the NI Executive's June monitoring round to secure some element of funding to kick-start the reform programme and to support transition related activities linked to the Transition Committees.		
2.4	<b>Communications</b>		
2.4.1	A communications plan is currently being developed to underpin the Council's approach to reform and to ensure that elected Members, staff and citizens alike (including those new citizens coming into the City from Lisburn and Castlereagh) are keep fully informed and engaged in the process as it moves forward.		
2.4.2	The DoE are also putting in place a communications framework which seeks to ensure greater transparency of process and regular progress updates. Attached at <b>Appendix 3</b> is a recent DoE local government reform circular which outlines the current position of the reform programme.		
2.5	<b>Transfer of functions proprietary pilots</b>		
2.5.1	As previously agreed by the Committee, there have been progressive and constructive discussions between council officers and senior officials from DSD, DoE and DRD to explore and scope out potential opportunities for integrated proprietary pilot initiatives.		
2.5.2	Pilot initiatives will provide an opportunity to learn through action, help to develop new working models and build institutional capacity among the key stakeholders in planning and regeneration within the city. It will avoid 'reinventing wheels' and smooth the future transfer of functions to the Council. Pilots will be a critical part of the process of capacity building and changing the way people and institutions act. They will essentially be test beds to develop and refine practical working arrangements while gaining buy in from and building confidence among all parties (e.g. departmental officials, councillors and council officers).		

	Pilots should examine how planning, regeneration and roads can be brought together at the local level to support existing council ambitions in regards to Place Shaping (e.g. local physical, economic and community development), aligned with the new community planning powers, to deliver enhanced outcomes and improve quality of life. A detailed report setting out the potential options will be submitted for the consideration of the Committee in August 2012.
2.5.3	In addition, the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Social Development has written to the Chief Executive, copy attached, advising him that the Department have initiated a review of the future structure and functions of the five Area Partnerships established by the Department in the City, and seeking input at an official level to inform the conversation given that the RPA will transfer regeneration functions to the Council and that the Council will be responsible for community planning. It is recommended that officers be authorised to input into these discussions subject to a clear indication being given to the Department that these inputs will be purely factual in nature and that emerging options will have to be forwarded to the Council for political input and direction.

#### **4.0 Resource Implications**

The detailed implementation plan to be submitted to the Committee on 22 June will set out the resource and capacity requirements attached to the Council's continued engagement and work relating to the established reform implementation structures and related Working Groups as well as delivering our own internal programme of work.

#### **5.0 Recommendations**

Members are asked to:

- (i) note the proposed officer nominations onto the DoE operational Task & Finish Working Groups
- (ii) note that a detailed implementation plan will be submitted for the consideration of the Committee at its next meeting;
- (iii) note that a further report on potential transfer of functions preparatory pilots will be submitted for the consideration of the Committee in August 2012; and
- (iv) to authorise officers to input factual information into the DSD review of Area Partnerships subject to the condition that emerging policy options will have to be brought to Committee for political direction and input.

#### **6.0 Appendices**

**Appendix 1** Internal note of discussions at Regional Transition Operational Board

**Appendix 2** DoE correspondence setting out proposals for Task and Finish Operational Working Groups

**Appendix 3** DoE circular which outlines the current position of the reform programme.

**Appendix 4** DoE correspondence regarding review of Area Partnerships