



**Belfast City Council**

<b>Report to</b>	<b>Strategic Policy and Resources Committee</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Update on Future Governance Arrangements for the Council</b>
<b>Date:</b>	7 February 2014
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Emer Husbands, Strategic Performance Manager Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	The Committee, at its meetings on 13th December 2013 received an update on the three options for governance structures in the new Councils laid out in the Reorganisation Bill. The Committee also agreed a process of engagement with Members to facilitate discussions on possible new political management arrangements.
1.2	This included a high-level overview of the range of options: (i) Traditional Committee System, (ii) Cabinet System, (iii) Streamlined Committee System.
1.3	The first stage in the process was to hold party group briefings facilitated by Jonathan Huish to outline the various models in more detail and outline some of the issues in operating the different structures.
1.4	Members also agreed to re constitute the Governance Steering Group to allow detailed discussion on some of the complex issues before bringing these to committee for decisions.
1.5	The party group briefings were held in February and nominations have been made to the Governance Steering panel with its first meeting scheduled for the 10 February 2014. This paper provides an update on the process to date including feedback from the party group briefings and proposal for next steps including specific workshops with the Governance Steering Group and further feedback to party groups and committee.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<p data-bbox="325 230 852 264"><b>Feedback from Party Group Briefings</b></p> <p data-bbox="325 297 1378 398">Jonathan Huish will be in attendance at the Committee to provide feedback from the party group briefings on Governance held in January 201. A summary of the emerging points are set out at Appendix One.</p> <p data-bbox="325 432 1406 566">The preference would be for an inclusive governance model. The broad feedback is that a Cabinet / Executive model would create two tiers of Members, and is unlikely to get support. A more efficient version of the current system has received positive feedback and a more strategic way of working is to be welcomed</p> <p data-bbox="325 600 1406 678">Area working is seen as positive, but the model needs to be clear particularly in relation to remit and relationship with committees - internal and external.</p> <p data-bbox="325 712 1406 813">Qualified Majority Voting - the principle is welcomed but there was some concern about the 80% level. The question was raised about what decisions will require QMV.</p> <p data-bbox="325 846 1406 925">Call-In was seen as a positive. There was concern that, without limits, it may slow / halt Council business.</p> <p data-bbox="325 958 1406 1037">Proportionality was viewed as essential and there is a need to think through protection of rights of smaller groups in terms of inclusivity.</p> <p data-bbox="325 1070 1406 1126">Appendix One provides a summary of common queries and responses is set out below.</p>
2.3	<p data-bbox="325 1126 804 1160"><b>Establishment of Shadow Council</b></p> <p data-bbox="325 1160 1406 1261">A consultation document is due to be released within the next week on the functions and powers of the Shadow Council. This is likely to state that the role of each Shadow Council should be to;</p> <p data-bbox="325 1294 1406 1473">Prepare itself for the assumption of its full functions and powers on 1 April 2015 by</p> <ul data-bbox="373 1328 1406 1473" style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• establishing governance arrangements - committees and sub-committees;</li> <li>• appointing staff and</li> <li>• preparing budgets, plans and schemes as are or will be needed for that purpose</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="325 1507 1406 1574">They will also be required to liaise with the existing Council for the purposes of ensuring continuity in the exercise of its functions on and after 1 April 2015</p> <p data-bbox="325 1608 1406 1843">There is a requirement on the STC to recommend for approval to the first meeting of the Shadow Council governance arrangements for the term of the Shadow Council. These arrangements will only be in place for one year and the new Council, when it officially comes into existence on 1 April 2015, will have to agree new governance structures to take account of the extended boundary, new powers and transferred functions. These will be developed by the Shadow Council during their term.</p> <p data-bbox="325 1877 1406 2036">The role for members now, through the STC, is to recommend to the Shadow Council interim governance structures which will take into account the functions to be delivered by the Shadow Council and possibly test some decision making processes relating to new areas, such as planning, in advance of them transferring in April 2015.</p>

	<p>At the same time consideration will need to be given to the operation of the existing Council and its role in relation to the Shadow Council including balance of work flow and time commitments on Members.</p> <p>It is therefore recommended that the work of the Governance Steering Panel focuses on detailed discussions on possible governance structures for the Shadow Council and how this will impact on the work on the current Council. The out workings of these discussions would then be brought back to Party Groups, SP&amp;R and STC.</p>
3.0	<p><b>Next Steps – Process of Engagement</b></p> <p>The first meeting of the Governance Steering Panel has been scheduled for the 10<sup>th</sup> February 2014 to begin to discuss the possible governance structures for the existing Council and Shadow Council.</p> <p>Options will be presented to Party Groups in March for discussion and consultation.</p> <p>Draft proposals on the governance arrangements will be brought to SP&amp;R and STC in April 2014 for consideration.</p> <p>Final governance structure to be agreed at the first meeting of the Shadow Council not more than 21 days after the election on 22 May 2014.</p> <p>The Shadow Council will, during their term, develop governance structures for the adoption by the new Council when it comes into operation on 1 April 2015.</p>

<b>4</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
4.1	All costs associated with this have been included in the previously agreed budget for Local Government Reform.

<b>5</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Implications</b>
	None.

<b>6</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	<p>The Committee is requested to note the contents of the report and</p> <p>(i) To agree the proposals for the development of governance structures for the Shadow Council as outlined above.</p>

<b>6</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
	STC – Statutory Transition Committee



## **Appendix One: Summary of Member Queries**

### **The role of the existing Council versus the role of the Shadow Council and the number of meetings of the various committees in each.**

Under the proposals there will be two separate Council meetings – one for existing Council and one for new Council acting in shadow form. They will be two separate legal entities and it would not be feasible for all Members to meet at the same time under separate legislation.

### **To what extent will the existing Committees continue to work during the shadow period?**

The expectation would be that the work of existing committees would 'wind down', and would tend to focus on the purely operational aspects, seeing out existing programmes, etc. This will need to be agreed with Members.

### **Area Working Groups – how will this work under the new arrangements, will there be 4 area working groups and will they have any powers?**

Members were advised that the number of and composition of any area working groups will be for the new Council to decide.

### **The role of the Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor in during the Shadow period**

The proposals provide for the existing Council to elect a Mayor and Deputy Mayor who would continue in their role during 2014 – 2015 as in previous years.

The Shadow Council will be required to select a Presiding and Deputy Presiding Officer (Chair and Deputy Chair) for the shadow period (one year term from May 2014 – April 2015) but they would have no ceremonial responsibilities / duties.

### **Greater clarification was sought on what decisions QMV would apply**

The detail as to the decisions requiring QMV has yet to be agreed by the Minister but will definitely include the selection or changing of the governance model for the Council; the selection of the method for allocating positions of responsibility, and also altering the calculation of quota for allocating positions on committees.

The new Council will also be able, within standing orders, to select a range of decisions for which QMV would apply.

### **Community Planning – queries around the need for Council objectives to be linked to the needs of communities and areas.**

Members were advised that community planning is addressed in the LG Bill and that the Council will be required to develop objectives with Community Planning partners and will be required to report on the Community Plan. The Community Plan will be linked to

agreed corporate objectives and the Local Development Plan.

**What will happen if the Local Government Bill was not passed before the election**

Members were advised that the election legislation is separate and that the new 11 Councils will be elected regardless of the Bill being in place or otherwise. In the absence of the Bill the new Council will operate under the provisions of the 1972 Act which apply to the current Councils.