



Subject:	City-region devolution
Date:	13 April 2016
Reporting Officer:	Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Caroline Wilson, Neighbourhood and Development Manager Sharon McNicholl, Strategic Policy and Planning Manager

Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	This report is to provide an update on work in relation to developing a Belfast city-region 'deal'.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Note the progress towards developing a Belfast city-region 'deal'.
3.0	Main report
	Background
3.1	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed in November 2015 that the Council should seek to influence the development of the next NI Executive Programme of Government and Investment Plans. This included commissioning expert assistance to articulate the case for a Belfast city-region 'deal' or devolution package. This was consequent to a Notice of Motion entitled 'City Growth' agreed by Council earlier in 2015.

3.2	<p>This is directly connected to work ongoing in relation to City Centre regeneration, and it is argued that, given the appropriate freedoms and flexibilities, city-region devolution could enable greater and more widely distributed economic growth, as well as the dramatic improvement of public services.</p>
3.3	<p>Subsequently, officers have completed an initial review of the various approaches to greater devolution for cities in England, and more recently, in Scotland and Wales (attached as Appendix 1). This largely focuses on three main areas of support from central government::</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- funding;- transfer of powers and;- increased cooperation.
3.4	<p>Given the links to Westminster, the Chief Executive has also had discussions with the Belfast MPs and the Secretary of State to outline the Council's ambitions in this regard and seek their input. In addition, as part of the agenda for the Belfast Strategic Issues Group, all the Permanent Secretaries have also been briefed. The paper shared with the stakeholders has been attached for information (Appendix 2). Broadly speaking, all meetings have been positive and generated support for the Council's direction and initiative on the matter.</p>
3.5	<p>As part of the process, the Council is developing a robust evidence-based business case to argue for greater devolution for the Belfast city-region. To this end, ResPublica has been commissioned to develop a preliminary report on what a Belfast-region devolution deal might look like. They have a strong track record in working with cities, including Glasgow and Liverpool, in securing additional freedoms and flexibilities in a devolution package. ResPublica has produced a preliminary paper, attached as Appendix 3.</p>
3.6	<p>In addition, given the importance of strong city-regional linkages, Centre for Cities has been commissioned as 'honest broker' in facilitating dialogue with neighbouring Councils and the business community, as well as other interested parties including Derry and Strabane Council.</p>
3.7	<p>The draft report on the Belfast-region 'asks' for devolution will be presented to SP&R Committee in April. Following this, and subsequent to the Assembly elections, there will be a series of political briefings and community engagement to advocate and build support for a Belfast city-region deal and develop the detail required for a phased implementation. It is anticipated detailed discussions with the NI Executive will take place later in 2016, to</p>

	identify opportunities to integrate the Council's ambitions into the Programme for Government.
3.8	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> None at present
3.8	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u> Any emerging 'deal' will be subject to equality and good relations screening.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 - Overview of City Deals (Belfast City Council: October 2015)</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Briefing paper for Strategic Issues Group (Belfast City Council: 30 Nov 15)</p> <p>Appendix 3 - Belfast: From City Deal to City Devolution (ResPublica: March 2016)</p>