



Subject:	Public Policy Forum NI
Date:	23 rd November 2018
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City & Organisational Strategy
Contact Officer:	John Tully, Director of City & Organisational Strategy

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
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	A public policy think tank is currently being developed in NI with the aim of launching in March 2019. This think tank will follow similar models that exist throughout the UK and Europe (please see Appendix 1 for detailed proposals for the creation of Public Policy Forum NI). The Chief Executive has been asked to sit on the Reference Group of the Forum. This report therefore seeks Members approval for the Chief Executive to sit on the Reference Group.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to <ul style="list-style-type: none">Consider the request from Public Policy Forum NI for the Chief Executive to sit on their Reference Group. Should Members agree to this request, an agreement will be drawn with the Forum where the Chief Executive will avoid participating in any potential conflicts of interest relating to Council policy or political issues.

<p>3.0</p>	<p>Main report</p> <p><u>KEY ISSUES</u></p> <p>Background</p> <p>3.1 In NI the public policy debate is often the preserve of the public sector with public discourse largely limited to constitutional questions. There are few ‘independent’ policy forums to debate classic public sector issues such as the economy, public health, education and sustainable development.</p> <p>3.2 While there are number of institutions that fill some of this space, such as the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre and large charitable organisations, they are often tied to government through tender contracts, SLAs or in the case of charities rely on central government for their funding. In the case of sectoral bodies such as CBI and CoC, while they are successful in engaging and influencing policy discourse, they are membership organisations and therefore reflect the particular focus of their base.</p> <p>3.2 There have also been a number of attempts to establish ‘think tanks’ in the past (notably a proposal in 2012 that was being driven by a US donor), however these have failed to materialise.</p> <p>3.4 Public Policy Forum NI aims to fill this void, develop long term thinking and contribute substantially to public debate. A key aspect of the forum will be the engagement of the public in the process of determining public policy, aiming to open debate to a much wide audience, informing people in a manner that non-experts will understand.</p> <p>Initial Activity</p> <p>3.5 Within its first 12 months the organisation will undertake a ‘foundational’ Vision project, ‘Vision 2040’. Led by younger people but inclusive of all, this project will map out the nature of society people want to live in by the year 2040. Alongside the Vision project the Forum would publish research on what the demographic data tells us about 2040; and flowing from that, would examine the challenges and opportunities that would need to be met in order to achieve the outcomes that Vision 2040 identifies.</p> <p>Governance</p> <p>3.6 The organisation will be a limited Company with charitable status. The organisations founding members will form its Board of Trustees. A reference group of some 26 members has already been established (Annex B of attached document).</p>
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Funding

- 3.7 In order to ensure both sustainability and independence, the organisation will seek to develop a mixed model of funding, including: individual donations, corporate donations and sponsorship, philanthropic support, and research commissions. The model may also include an element of funding from public sources, so long as it would not prejudice its independence.
- 3.8 The Statement of Values at Annex A of Appendix 1 includes commitments that reflect the determination to maintain the new organisation's independence, including on how the organisation will approach its fundraising. These include commitments to retain the freedom to publish its findings regardless of whether funders agree with them, and to make its publications and programme of events and activities accessible to all. If the new organisation is to establish a reputation and track record over time – and particularly if it is to be freestanding of other - philanthropic support will be essential.
- 3.9 While the organisation will seek to ensure that it is not reliant on any one source of funding, a small number of sources may be necessary during its foundation stage. Such support would free its staff to concentrate on building the organisation's credibility through the delivery of its activities and outcomes; rather than struggling from one grant to the next, with all of the resource that is required to keep applying for more funding.
- Regardless of where funding is drawn from, appropriate safeguards will be put in place to protect the organisation and its values from undue influence.

Reference Group

- 3.10 In order to secure a wide range of voices and inputs, and ensure that the organisation's work is well-grounded, a Reference Group has already been established, as shown at Annex B of Appendix 1. The members of the Reference Group have specifically been chosen for their personal experience and expertise and the Public Policy Forum feel that the Chief Executive of the Council would add rich insight given her experience in local government.
- The Reference Group will not be a decision-making body. Its members are invited to join in order to provide insights and ideas in relation to the organisation's current and future research and communication strategies, and provide feedback on the organisation's contribution, rather than to represent any other organisations in which they may be involved or employed.

FINANCIAL & RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 3.11 There are no additional financial implications contained within this report. Any commissioning or contributions will be funded out of current budgets.

	EQUALITY OR GOOD RELATIONS IMPLICATIONS/RURAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT
3.12	No implications
4.0	Appendices – Documents attached
	Appendix 1 – Public Policy Forum NI Proposal