

**LISBURN CITY COUNCIL/CASTLEREAGH BOROUGH COUNCIL
TRANSITION COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Lisburn City Council/Castlereagh Borough Council
Transition Committee held in the Island Civic Centre, The Island, Lisburn on
Thursday, 18th June 2009 at 7.00 pm**

PRESENT:

The Right Worshipful the Mayor of Lisburn
Councillor R Crawford

Chairman, Alderman E C Poots

Aldermen S P Porter, G Rice and J White

Councillors J Beattie, P A Butler, A G Ewart, B Hanvey, M
Henderson, T J Lunn, G Robinson, J Spratt, L Walker and J White

IN ATTENDANCE:

Lisburn City Council

Chief Executive
Director of Environmental Services
Director of Leisure Services
Assistant Director Corporate Services (Mrs C Connolly)
Assistant Director Corporate Services (Mrs L Scott)
Policy & Co-ordination Officer
Committee Secretary

Castlereagh Borough Council

Acting Chief Executive
Director of Technical & Environmental Services
H R Manager (Acting) (Mrs H Currie)

Commencement of the Meeting

In the absence of the Chairman, Alderman E C Poots, at this point in the meeting, the Vice-Chairman, Councillor B Hanvey, took the chair and conducted the business on the agenda. Councillor Hanvey welcomed those present to the meeting.

1. Apologies

It was agreed to accept apologies for non-attendance at the meeting on behalf of Councillor D J Craig, the Director of Corporate Services, Lisburn City Council, and the Directors of Leisure Services (Acting) and Admin & Community Services, Castlereagh Borough Council.

2. Minutes

It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting of the Transition Committee held on 20 May, 2009 be accepted as a true and accurate record.

3. Report of the Chief Executive

3.1 Meeting with Ian Maye, Local Government Policy Division

Councillor L Walker left the meeting during consideration of this item of business (7.14 pm). Alderman G Rice entered the meeting during consideration of this item of business (7.26 pm), as did The Right Worshipful the Mayor of Lisburn, Councillor R Crawford (7.50 pm).

The Acting Chairman, Councillor B Hanvey, welcomed to the meeting Mr I Maye and Ms A Fitzpatrick from the DOE Local Government Policy Division. With the use of visual aid equipment, Mr Maye made a presentation to the Committee in respect of key Executive decisions, Local Government reform implementation structures, progress made to date, legislation and funding issues. As requested previously by the Committee, Mr Maye specifically addressed issues regarding property, powers of Transition Committees, legislation from Central Government within which Transition Committees should operate and liaison with the Transition Committee of Belfast City Council.

Mr Maye responded to several queries raised by Members and took of their comments, following which the Acting Chairman, Councillor B Hanvey, thanked him and Ms Fitzpatrick for their attendance and they left the meeting (8.35 pm).

*[Item 5 (a) of the minutes of the Transition Committee meeting held on 16 July 2009 refers – Transcript of questions and answers attached hereto under **Appendix 1**]*

3.2 Posts of Change Manager and Committee Secretary

The Chairman, Alderman E C Poots, arrived to the meeting during consideration of this item of business (8.45 pm). The Vice-Chairman, Councillor B Hanvey, remained in the chair and conducted the remainder of business on the agenda.

The post of Committee Secretary had been advertised in the local press on 5 June, with a closing date of 19 June, 2009. However, the Chief Executive (LCC) pointed out that it had been brought to his attention after the advertisement had been placed that the job specification for the post of Committee Secretary, as advertised, was of a higher level than that which applied in Castlereagh Borough Council and, accordingly, the five Committee Clerks in that Council would be excluded from applying for the position. The Chief Executive (LCC) stated that his personal recommendation, which may not necessarily be supported by the senior management of Castlereagh Borough Council, was that the job specification should not be changed as any specification, or indeed job description, should not be drafted to suit any individual or group of individuals and it would be bad practice so to do. *[Item 5.1 of the minutes of the Transition Committee meeting held on 16 July 2009 refers]*

Following lengthy discussion, it was proposed by Alderman S P Porter, seconded by Alderman G Rice and agreed that:

- (a) whilst the post of Committee Secretary was an open competition being advertised for the general public, the job specification be amended in order that existing Committee Secretaries in both Councils would not be excluded from also applying for the post. A new advertisement would be placed and those persons who had already applied for the post would be made aware of the new specification;

3.2 Posts of Change Manager and Committee Secretary (Contd)

- (b) the new advertisement, together with any future advertisements for other posts relating to the Transition Committee, would bear the heading Lisburn City Council/ Castlereagh Borough Council Transition Committee;
- (c) before being placed in the press, the new advertisement for the post of Committee Secretary would be agreed by the Human Resources Officers of both Councils; and,
- (d) all future staffing matters be discussed by the Human Resources Officers of both Councils.

The Chief Executive (LCC) advised those present that the post of Change Manager had been advertised in the local press that day and would appear in the Belfast Telegraph the following day, with a closing date of 3 July, 2009. The Chairman, Alderman E C Poots, had expressed a wish to have Elected Members on the interview panel for this post; however, due to the salary grade of the post, the Local Government Code of Recruitment Procedures would indicate that a post of this level would consist of an Officer-only interview panel. The Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) had been requested to give its approval to the varying of the procedures in order to permit Elected Members to be on the interview panel and had confirmed that the panel could consist of one Elected Member and one Officer from each Council, with normal consideration being given to the gender and community background aspects of panel composition. This being the case, it was agreed that The Right Worshipful the Mayor of Lisburn, Councillor R Crawford, and the Assistant Director Corporate Services (Mrs C Connolly) would represent Lisburn City Council on the interview panel and Councillor J White and Mrs H Currie, HR Manager (Acting), would represent Castlereagh Borough Council.

3.3 Staffing Matters

Alderman S P Porter left the meeting during consideration of this item of business (9.14 pm).

Further to the decision of the last meeting of the Committee, the Chief Executive (LCC) advised that relevant Officers of both Councils had met to discuss and address matters relating to staffing. An agreed report by Officers of both Councils had been presented to the Corporate Services Committee of Lisburn City Council and the Finance and General Purposes Committee of Castlereagh Borough Council. The Committee's decisions in this regard still required ratification by both Councils.

Following discussion regarding the issue of fixed term contracts, it was agreed that the Human Resources Officers from both Councils prepare a joint recommendation for further consideration by the respective Committees of each Council and, in due course, be presented to the Transition Committee.

3.4 Dates of Future Meetings

Members noted from the Chief Executive's report, a list of Transition Committee meeting dates until the end of the year.

3.5 Capital Schemes

Following discussion, it was proposed by Councillor J White, seconded by Councillor M Henderson and agreed that the Committee support the three loan sanction applications from Lisburn City Council which were currently with the Department of the Environment (i-iii below) and the two additional schemes which it would be submitting to the Department in the near future (iv-v below):

- i Aberdelghy Golf Course – loan sanction cost £2,155,500
- ii Vehicle Replacement 2007-08-2010/11 – loan sanction cost £2,272,500
- iii Hillsborough Multi-Use Games Area – loan sanction cost £350,000
- iv Wallace Park Improvements – loan sanction cost £2,937,000
- v Milne/Barbour Bowling Green Car Park – loan sanction cost £70,000

It was further agreed that an initial report on the capital programmes for both Councils be made to the meeting of the Transition Committee in July.

[Item 5.2 of the minutes of the Transition Committee meeting held on 16 July 2009 refers]

3.6 Co-operation Between Transition Management Teams and Transition Committees

Members having been furnished with a copy of an email dated 21 May, 2009 from the Chief Executive of Newtownabbey Borough Council suggesting co-operation between Transition Committees and Transition Management Teams across the Province in order to discuss issues of common interest, it was proposed by Councillor J Spratt, seconded by Alderman G Rice and agreed that its contents be noted.

As agreed at the last meeting of the Committee, the Chief Executive (LCC) reported that steps were being taken to establish a meeting with Transition Committees in the greater Belfast area to discuss infrastructure and marketing of the area.

As requested previously by the Committee, correspondence had been sent to Belfast City Council seeking representation on the Belfast City Council Transition Committee. In this regard, Members had been furnished with correspondence dated 5 June, 2009 from Belfast City Council from which it was noted that formal membership on its Transition Committee was not being agreed to but that an on-going liaison relationship was being suggested. Following discussion it was proposed by Councillor P A Butler, seconded by Councillor T J Lunn and agreed that arrangements be made for an early meeting of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Lisburn City Council/Castlereagh Borough Council Transition Committee with representatives of the Belfast City Council Transition Committee.

It was further proposed by Alderman E C Poots, seconded by Councillor J Spratt and agreed that, should the outcome of the aforesaid meeting be unsatisfactory, a letter be forwarded to the Minister advising that the ratepayers of Lisburn City and Castlereagh Borough Councils deserved to be treated with courtesy and respect and have their voices heard, ie. by having their Elected Members represented on the Belfast City Council Transition Committee.

3.7 Council Strategies

The Chief Executive (LCC) having reported that the current Council Strategies of both Lisburn City Council and Castlereagh Borough Council were due to end this year, it was agreed that both Council's Strategies be continued on a rolling basis until 2011 with any adjustments being made as considered necessary.

3.8 Meeting of Transition Committee – Media, Public and Press

It was agreed that meetings of the Transition Committee would be open to the media, public and press. The Committee would still retain the "Into Committee" arrangement for consideration of confidential business during which the media, public and press would be excluded. Agenda and reports (minus appendices) would be furnished to the media in advance of the meetings, with the appendices being provided, if requested, with the exception of any confidential correspondence.

[Item 5.3 of the minutes of the Transition Committee meeting held on 16 July 2009 refers]

It was suggested that future meetings of the Transition Committee take place in the Council Chamber of the host Council.

3.9 Away Day

It was agreed that arrangements be made for an Away Day to take place in mid September, at a Castlereagh Borough Council facility, in order to enable the Committee to discuss and consider its priorities and to agree a proposed timetable for the key activities. An approach would be made to Mr W Moore or Mr D Mitchell, former Chief Executives of local councils, who now provided consultancy services to the Department of the Environment regarding the Review of Public Administration, to act as a facilitator at the Away Day.

[Item 5.4 of the minutes of the Transition Committee meeting held on 16 July 2009 refers]

3.10 Council Headquarters

In view of the need to start preparatory work on the issues set out in his report, the Chief Executive (LCC) recommended that the Committee consider the identification of the facility to be the Headquarters of the new Council from May 2011. It was proposed by Councillor G Robinson, seconded by Councillor J Beattie and agreed that, prior to such a decision being taken, a report be prepared in respect of the entire estates of both Councils, for consideration at a future meeting of the Transition Committee.

[Item 5.5 of the minutes of the Transition Committee meeting held on 16 July 2009 refers]

3.11 Provisional Penny Product

Members had been furnished with, and noted the contents of, correspondence relating to the provisional penny product.

3.12 Seminar – "Making Transition Work: The Role of Elected Members and Officers" 6 July, 2009 – Craigavon Civic Centre

It was noted that Castlereagh Borough Council had made arrangements for several of its Elected Members to attend the above seminar. No nominations were made for Elected

3.12 Seminar – “Making Transition Work: The Role of Elected Members and Officers”
6 July, 2009 – Craigavon Civic Centre (Cont’d)

Members of Lisburn City Council to attend. It was agreed that authority be delegated to the Chief Executives of both Councils to nominate appropriate Officers to attend the seminar.

3.13 Transition Management Team Minutes

Members had been furnished with, and noted the contents of, a copy of the draft minutes of the meeting of the Transition Management Team held on 2 June, 2009, which it was noted had not yet been considered for accuracy by the Management Team.

3.14 Councils’ Responses to Consultation Documents

Members had been furnished with, and noted the contents of (a) a copy of the responses made by Castlereagh Borough Council to the recent DOE consultation documents on Transition Committees In Statute and Councillors’ Severance Arrangements; and, (b) a copy of Lisburn City Council’s response to the Transition Committee In Statute document. Lisburn City Council had decided not to make a Council response to the Councillors’ Severance Arrangements consultation document.

Additional Report

3.15 Establishment of Sub-Committees

Councillor A G Ewart left the meeting during consideration of this item of business (9.40 pm).

Members having been requested to indicate, in writing, their preference of membership for the under-noted sub-committees which were to be established, membership was agreed as follows:

(a) Governance, Community Planning and Central/Local Government Relationships

Councillor P A Butler, Councillor D J Craig, Councillor B Hanvey, Alderman G Rice and Councillor L Walker

(b) Service Delivery

Alderman W J Dillon, Councillor A G Ewart, Alderman E C Poots, Alderman S P Porter and Councillor G Robinson

[Item 5.6 of the minutes of the Transition Committee meeting held on 16 July 2009 refers]

(c) Structural Reform

The Right Worshipful the Mayor of Lisburn, Councillor R Crawford, Councillor J Beattie, Councillor T J Lunn, Councillor M Henderson, Councillor J Spratt and Alderman J White

4. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

There being no further business, the meeting was terminated at 9.41 pm.

Chairman

J Spratt	The Department has to create a level playing field for us to negotiate with Belfast. The Department needs to create a culture change. We need proper mechanisms so we are operating on a level playing field. We are not there at this minute in time. What concerns me is that you're passing the onus over to us to go away with these two options you have on the table. I think we need more clarity from the Department very clearly laid out. It needs to be clearly laid out by the Department to Belfast as well. If that does not happen there will be serious problems.
I Maye	I very much agree with you. Work is going on behind the scenes with independent advisors to deliver detailed guidance. Any discussions with Belfast are important. We are creating rules of engagement. I very much welcome your views this evening. I can take those away or we can continue to discuss what those arrangements may be. It's important for us to get this right.
J Spratt	There's a lot of sensitivities around our staff. In the case of Castlereagh staff working within those centres. There needs to be urgent clarity on it to give them some reassurance as well. There's a lot of nervous people about. We have to face this. These two councils are the ones facing that problem.
I Maye	I very much agree.
R Crawford	I agree with J Spratt. Success will be people not knowing what is happening. They may not notice much change in their bins being lifted but they will notice their rates. I anticipate at 20-25% increase. You will have a situation where you will have estates transferred to Belfast that we are still paying for that takes away the rates base that is paying for it. The debts of both councils need to be transferred in some commensurate way to Belfast. There has to be some fair and equitable way of looking at this. We feel aggrieved that many of the large rate paying areas in Castlereagh have been taken out and nothing has been done to say how we will pay debts. I can see nothing but problems ahead. We in Lisburn feel very aggrieved. We hope for changes by the Minister.
I Maye	You have a most difficult task and a most difficult set of issues to address. If you negotiate the transfer of assets to Belfast City Council, there's also the liabilities that come with those assets. If you transfer an asset to them, they take on the debt that goes with that asset. That is one of the issues we need absolute clarity on in giving you guidance and providing a level playing field. It has to be done in a way that meets the needs of your new council, Belfast and the ratepayers of both. I very much take the point you are making.

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J Beattie	I support the first two speakers. There are very important issues to Castlereagh – the transfer of the Robinson Centre that we own. Belfast may wish to provide something else but that land would be worth a lot of money to Lisburn and Castlereagh. Those are the kind of things we need to negotiate. Assets transferring that belong to us, I want to make sure we get remuneration.
I Maye	There needs to be a process of negotiation. If you decide you want to dispose of the Robinson Centre and not transfer, that's probably the right thing for you to do. It's an issue we need to provide clarity on and guidance that should form those discussions and negotiations. It's your right to decide what assets should be transferred.
G Rice	One of the things concerning me is, it's all very well negotiating but they don't always hold up to what the negotiations were to be. I would like legislation to ensure when we negotiate on something it is carried through correctly. I'm glad to hear any debt goes with the asset, that's very important. Transition will cost between £50-60m. Is funding available? We are being asked to do a lot of work in the next year or two. I would not be happy in early 2011 if we are told we don't have the money. What is the financial standing in terms of having money?
I Maye	We don't have a package of money voted by the Executive at the moment. All of the money currently in our budget we have given over to you to help you to do some initial work. The money we have we are trying to spend as wisely as we can. We will be taking major papers and a full economic appraisal in the Autumn. I can't guarantee what the Executive will decide, but we will be putting forward as strong a case as possible that a funding package is put in place to deliver the Executive's proposals. One of the issues the Minister will consider is how funding is delivered and conditions that may be attached to that. It is unlikely the Executive will vote for £50-60m to be put into my budget that I can then hand over to you without some mechanism to bring some of that money back into Central Government's coffers. One of the issues the Minister out to consider is whether we put in place loan arrangements. That has been done elsewhere in the UK.
G Rice	The impact will not be on us people but on the ratepayers. We are already looking at a big increase in our rates. If we have to take a loan to make this happen we will have to pay it back. The ratepayers will be paying it back. There's a lot of onus; is it really worth it?
I Maye	We will only know the answer after the full economic appraisal. In relation to cash and non-cash benefits in the long term, until we make a full economic appraisal to the Executive, I will not be in a position to know whether it is worth doing. Our findings from the work done by PwC so far is that it will be worth it. Local Government in its new form, if we take modernisation opportunities presented you will be able to deliver significant savings which you can then take

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	<p>and either transfer to delivery of additional front-line services to repay debt or keep the rates burden down or a combination of all three. That is the challenge you face every year. If the Executive receives an economic appraisal that tells it there is no long term gain in this process, no doubt they will pull the plug on the programme. I don't think that is what is going to happen. On the information we have, the programme will deliver long term savings to Local Government. We will not know for definite until we see the full economic appraisal. It will take a lot of time and energy to make sure we get that right. We are doing it in an open and transparent way.</p>
G Rice	<p>I can't see how long term benefits can appear without putting a burden on the ratepayers. It is a disgrace that we are looking at something that will impact very badly in terms of services and rates.</p>
I Maye	<p>The Executive does not want to pass additional burdens on to ratepayers. It wants to do everything possible to avoid that. This year it decided not to increase the regional rate as it was concerned about rates increases. Some councils managed to avoid that by sensitive approaches, others found it more difficult. I don't think this Executive will push forward a programme that will impose significant future burdens on ratepayers. If that is what they see from the economic appraisal, they will not do it, they will find another way. At the moment, I am confident, on the basis of work we have done with the Strategic Leadership Board and PwC, we can deliver a new system of Local Government that presents you with opportunities to drive out significant savings and efficiencies. Policy Development Panels have begun to identify benefits.</p>
G Rice	<p>Will we get an opportunity to see the economic appraisal?</p>
I Maye	<p>Yes, you will be involved in that process.</p>
P A Butler	<p>It strikes me listening that other Transition Committees don't have the same problems that this one does and Belfast, given they are taking on council areas, and the Department does not have this worked out. You have concentrated on Castlereagh but there are in the region of 30,000 people going in from Twinbrook and Poleglass. While this thing about the Boundaries Commissioner and his recommendations has not been finally settled, most will go into Belfast by an large. There is an issue around the timescale now. We may not get any sort of agreement until later on this year. That gives us 2010 to try to sort this all out. There are staffing issues in Castlereagh and how you work all that out. Twinbrook, Poleglass waste management – how will that be handled? Amenity centres, leisure centres? It seems to be being left up to the Lisburn/Castlereagh Transition Committee to work this out with Belfast but there is no statutory obligation between here and Belfast. We are being very optimistic to think we will work all this out in a year. Another big issue is projects that are started by here and Castlereagh, where do they sit in all of this? Twinbrook/Poleglass and</p>

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	Castlereagh areas going into Belfast. The Minister at present has a conflict of interest, he sits in Belfast City Council.
I Maye	My intention is to deliver answers very quickly. We only have 23 months left before the new councils come into being. We may not have all the issues settled in advance of that, I recognise that. But we need to have the principal issues settled. We need to have agreed how ratepayers and citizens in the areas affected are to be delivered services on day one of the new council. That is the bare minimum. We will provide you with as much support as we can in that process. we need to look at whether your Transition Committee receives some additional funding. You face the most uniquely complex difficulties because of the significant boundary changes and location of assets you have at present. I don't underestimate the challenge that presents. We will work with you on this and try to help you through it; we will support you however we can to make negotiations as easy as possible. We can't guarantee the outcome; that will be down to you and Belfast. We will work with you and try to provide a level playing field. The Minister will have powers of intervention if we are facing the possibility of failure. Our intention is not to have to exercise those powers unless there is no other option.
S P Porter	I have a letter here for Belfast City Council asking why our areas are not being represented on their Transition Committee. In regard to what they put forward, the Minister's approval was conveyed to council on 2 February. The concerns we have could have been sorted out well before now. I would state that while we are still arguing over what Belfast is taking, we need to make sure we are able to have an active and equal voice with Belfast in that regard. At the minute we don't have legal grounding bit it was stated that any capital programmes have to go through this Committee for approval.
I Maye	Not for approval, for discussion.
S P Porter	If the Transition Committee then says no that is not happening. We have no legal grounding to say that. Each council can say at least you are aware of that.
I Maye	That position will change when you take on your new statutory powers next year. It's a voluntary arrangement at the minute. You have to work with your two councils to work through convergence issues and reach consensus. At a later stage we will come to a point that this Transition Committee has to take primacy in a sense in driving the process forward. That is what new legislation is designed to deliver.
M Henderson	We keep hearing 23 months and that is the deadline but we don't have statutory powers to 2010. We can make suggestions and recommendations but we could be doing a lot of work and not be listened to. It could be a waste of time

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	<p>in some cases. We are looking after two sets of staff and each council will be looking after their employees and see how best to represent their ratepayers, staff and council area. When we come together in January to look at the way forward, until that is in place it is hard to get anything put forward. It was put to me one night, what would happen if a ratepayer takes a civil action against us? As a ratepayer they will have a stake in that community and would not be happy to be moving from Castlereagh. If they took a civil action, is there anything to stop them from doing that?</p>
<p>I Maye</p>	<p>There is nothing to stop them. We would have to defend our position if such actions were taken. There is protection against those actions but it will not entirely protect us. In those circumstances, we would have to deal with the issues as and when they arise. We are considering taking legislation to the NI Assembly where those issues can be battened down as tightly as possible, to get some measure of protection when issues are voted on in the NIA. But it never gives complete protection. We would deal with any challenges as and when they arise. We are very conscious that in moving to the new arrangements there will be winners and losers. In considering how the process is managed, primarily in the first year, when people receive council services and pay rates to existing organisations and then move on, we are trying to smooth the transition as much as possible for the individual ratepayers and councils involved. We are looking at the detail of how that can happen. We will, in due course, take that work into the NIA through the Executive and try to put in place necessary legal arrangements to make it happen. There is a lot to do. We are aware of the potential for challenge as we are doing it.</p>
<p>M Henderson</p>	<p>You expect us to have efficiency savings. The way I see them is against my employment, look at the workforce. There will be efficiency savings in the reduction of the number of councillors and council employees needed for the new council area. That aside, what other statutory bodies will come in will outweigh what we are shedding in terms of efficiencies. Budget will originally be coming with them but will the ratepayers be expected to pay because of planners etc. after that time. Where will efficiencies be made? Will we get a long term commitment from Central Government?</p>
<p>I Maye</p>	<p>The detail of how funding arrangements are put in place regarding each individual function transferring is being negotiated within the transfer of functions working group panel C. Take planners for example – the majority of Planning Service Development Control and Development Plan staff salaries are paid for by receipt of planning applications and consent applications dealt with by the Planning Service. The challenge and agreement that has to be struck between the Executive and Local Government in transferring Planning Service staff and functions is how much of that will be generated by receipts now and in the future and how much will need to be topped up by Central Government. Look across the water, it's very rarely the case that receipts cover all costs in councils. There's almost invariably a top-up grant from Central Government to cover and meet the costs. We are working on that with Planning Service, through and with the Executive. It's the same with every function transferring to Local Government.</p>

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M Henderson	Would that include pensions, bonuses, etc?
I Maye	That's being looked at and is one of the issues that will need to be negotiated. The sorts of issues that are close to the hearts of staff transferring to Local Government. Health have put arrangements in place for protecting pensions.
M Henderson	For the first 18 months it is all protected but after that if they are working in the same type of department and staff there will be a job evaluation so all staff are the same.
I Maye	We don't yet know. That has to be factored into negotiations and discussions as to the detail of how those functions are transferred. It will happen at regional level and involving the Strategic Leadership Board, Panels, Ministers and the Executive. It will be informed by the practical experiences you have in your Transition Committees at local level. The politicians working on your behalf at regional level need to take your cue.
E Patterson	The word negotiation has been used to describe the mechanism of assets and liabilities moving geographically but there's no negotiation on the rates base. As we stand, assets and liabilities in the new geographical area may be across the boundary and still remain in the ownership of our two councils but this is up for negotiation with Belfast. Is there no negotiation on the rates base? Surely given the circumstances we face, there has to be something that you can get equity to balance so we can move forward. There is something missing if we don't look at that as well.
I Maye	That has to be factored into negotiations you enter into with Belfast.
E Patterson	We have no starting point. We can only negotiate on our assets and liabilities.
I Maye	Yes
J Spratt	I have heard you say negotiation. I think Belfast see themselves as the capital committee. There's arrogance among their officers and elected representatives. The bottom line is, only your negotiations can take place – you and the Department and the Minister have to take them on board. An independent broker needs to be involved. I, nor my colleagues, will go to Belfast to be treated as second class citizens. I don't think we can negotiate with them; it will not work. I will not waste my time sitting with Belfast. There will have to be some independent panel to sort this stuff out. We will not have to be involved. We should not even start to try with Belfast at this minute in time.

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I Maye	I will take that back to the Minister. There needs to be some arbitration.
J White	It occurs to me one of the issues I have is regarding having no statutory back-up here. It gives me a huge amount of concern when it comes to this committee making decisions. Has any thought been given to redundancy packages that will be available to staff who will be made redundant? Who will bear the cost?
I Maye	One estimate in our initial work is up to £10m may need to be set aside for those packages. We are working on the detail. It has to be factored into the full economic appraisal and funding package we will take to the Executive for negotiation in the Autumn. It is a big issue. The detail of the package will go to the new cross structural joint forum. Your representatives on that joint forum will come from the NIJC, Central Government will be represented by some senior civil servants. Other organisations, like the Housing Executive, need to sit at that table. The key players in that negotiation will be in the NJC. Those negotiations need to have routes back in. There are negotiations as to how that happens. There's no doubt in my mind that trade unions will take as their starting point packages developed for others affected. The best packages so far have been offered in Health and in the NI Libraries Authority. That will be the starting point. Our job within that forum will be to negotiate out the detail of those packages and then to agree with Ministers, Executive and your Local Government representatives on that group, how funding of those packages will be delivered.
J White	It's getting a bit late in the day to be just starting into all of this. It should be running in tandem with the rest of the stuff.
I Maye	It is but the detail has to be hammered through that joint forum. The aim is to reach agreement in the next three months.
J Beattie	From Westminster there was a debate put for a proposal in NI, Wales and Scotland to be reduced under the Barnett formula. That will affect NI's budget at Stormont. You either have to reduce your services or staff or whatever to reduce that. In trying to do that, Stormont has not a lot of money. At the end of the day it will be off-loaded to the ratepayers. That concerns me. If you do there will be a lot of outcry from the Councillors.
N Davidson	My concern is that, no doubt 2011 will happen but I think what will happen will be significantly different from the original aspirations of the strong vibrant vision for Local Government. In a matter of months perhaps the focus will turn to what is the absolute minimum that has to be done to make 2011 happen, whether because of legislative or financial pressures. I think a lot of aspirations will not happen in 2011. It will be seamless for the ratepayers but I have no confidence it will be seamless for the officers or elected members. We will be left to pick up the pieces and continue to try and make the vision work. The deal this was sold on will not happen in 2011, I think. It will be a work in progress

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	after 2011. It could take a number of years for the issues that have been raised here tonight for Officers and Members to grapple with after 2011.
I Maye	That is a realistic concern. Elected Members on the Strategic Leadership Board will share that concern. Last July they had a debate about whether it was feasible in the time available to not only deliver the new 11 councils with their new functions and in a reasonably seamless way, but also to drive forward the programme of modernisation. They reached the pragmatic view that while we should take the opportunities presented in making the move from 26 to 11 councils, realistically the long term vision would not be delivered in 2011 but the long term vision would take a number of years. The next 23 months is transition. There is a longer term programme to pursue vigorously within the 11 councils to deliver the vision they have signed up to. There will be a transitional phase and a lot of hard work will come after 2011. There is a willingness and determination on the part of the Minister and the Executive and also people in Local Government to engage in that longer term. There is a limit to what we can achieve in the next 23 months.
T J Lunn	In relation to the transfer of assets and liabilities and our ability to negotiate with Belfast, we have been having trouble with Belfast for years, that's nothing new. Castlereagh anticipate problems. Belfast has to negotiate with us, whether we have a referee or not, unless that independent input would have decision making powers, Belfast has to be grown-up about it. I'm not so sure that just because they have displayed an arrogant attitude so far we need an umpire.
G Rice	We have 23 months left, there have been no negotiations, no invitation to sit on their Transition Committee. Someone needs to give them a kick in the backside to get them moving along. We have an input as much as them.
I Maye	In my mind, you have the upper hand. They are your assets, you own them. That puts you in a powerful position. They can't force assets off you if you choose to hold onto them.
J White	The biggest factor is the rates base. All the big developments in Castlereagh are going into Belfast, they are getting a huge rates base from that.
G Rice	The problem is for residents in housing estates if Belfast won't play ball. I have a fear that people will lose out in this area as Belfast won't negotiate.