

Mayoral Governance: a view from the North

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A little background

- The Local Government (Ireland) Act 1898
- Post 1920: Unionist hegemony established
- Pressures for reform in 1960s
- Macrory Report 1970

A little background

- 26 new councils from October 1973 with limited powers
- In 1985 Sinn Fein contested elections
- Disruption in council chambers
- 1989 elections marked turning point
- 'Responsibility sharing' emerges
- Belfast/Good Friday Agreement 1998

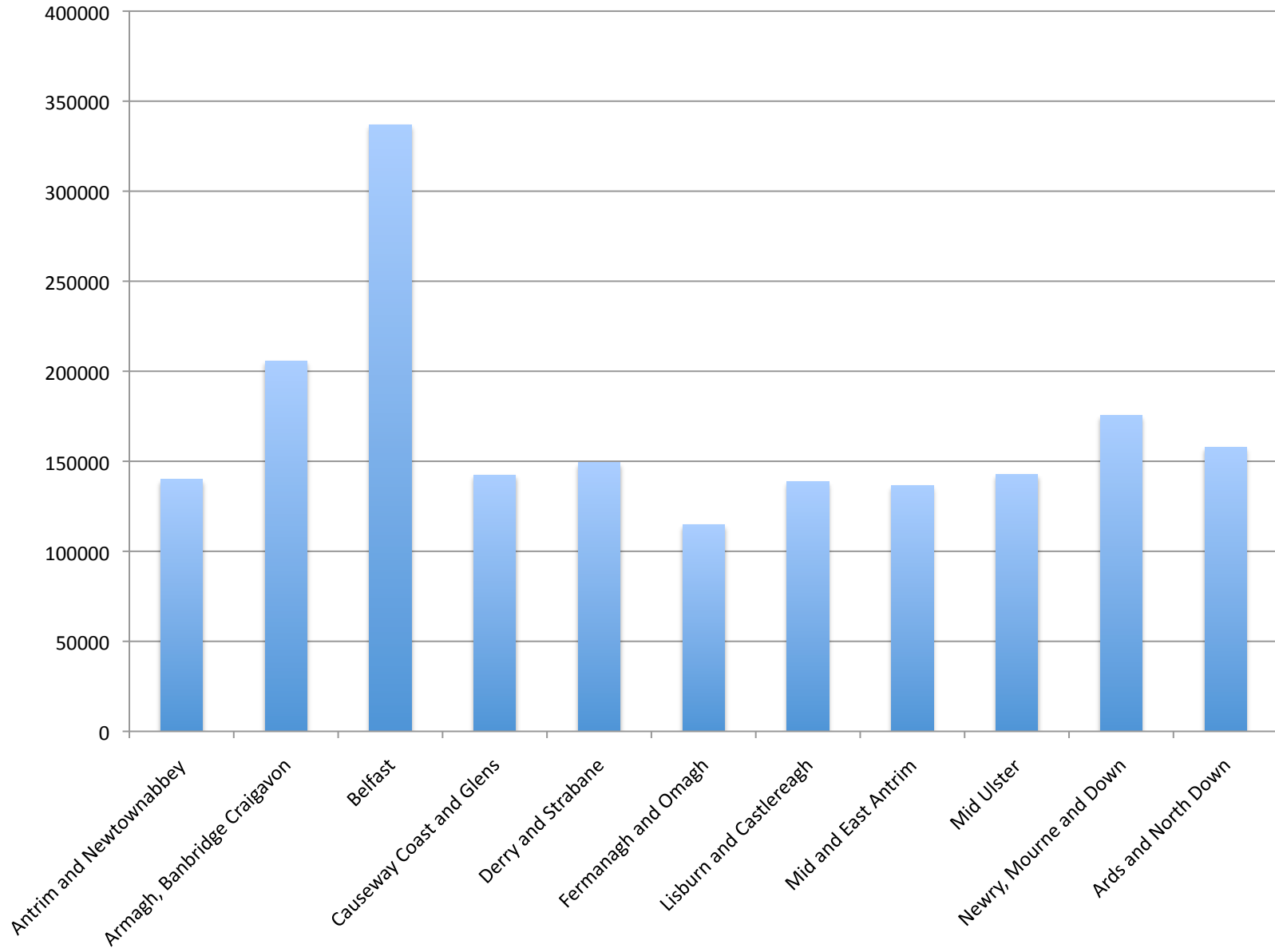
The Review of Public Administration

- RPA launched in 2002
- On-off nature of devolution
- Devolution restored 2007
- RPA promised strong local government with extended functions
- 26 councils reduced to 11 operational from 1st April 2015.

Northern Ireland Councils

Responsible for	Not responsible for
Waste collection and disposal	Education
Local development planning	Health and personal social services
Building control	Roads
Environmental protection & improvement	Fire
Leisure services and local tourism	Police
Arts, heritage and cultural facilities	Transport
Street cleaning	Public Housing
Food safety	Urban regeneration
Local economic development	Libraries
Off street parking	Trading standards
Community planning	Street lighting

Population by Council Areas



Size and Spend

- Average council population = 167,300 people
- Largest Council (336,830); Smallest (114,992)
- Total gross spending (11 councils) = £793.5m
- Per capita spend across 11 councils = £344
- Amount raised via district rates = £579m (91.4%)
- Northern Ireland Executive Budget = £10.3b
- Local government accounts for 7.7% of public spending

	Mayor/Chair	Deputy Mayor/Vice Chair
Antrim and Newtownabbey	DUP	SDLP
Ards and North Down	Alliance	DUP
Armagh, Banbridge Craigavon	Sinn Fein	DUP
Belfast	DUP	Sinn Fein
Causeway Coast and Glens	SDLP	UUP
Derry and Strabane	DUP	SDLP
Fermanagh and Omagh	SDLP	UUP
Lisburn and Castlereagh	UUP	Alliance
Mid and East Antrim	DUP	UUP
Mid Ulster	UUP	SDLP
Newry, Mourne and Down	SDLP	DUP

Directly elected Mayor?

- Chairs/Mayors: embedded principle of power-sharing
- Potency of mayoral symbolism beyond their functional importance
- Directly elected mayor could displace rotation arrangements with majoritarianism
- New statutory safeguards for council operations (Local Government Act [NI] 2014)

Directly elected Mayor?

- BUT, Belfast City Council has ambitious plans for physical, economic and community development
- Argument that cities drive business, not Stormont
- YET, city deals in GB built on the scale of local authority collaboration and wide ranging powers in transport, housing, skills and health

Directly elected Mayor?

- If Belfast CC is our best example, consider its political fragility
- Is Stormont our Northern Powerhouse, rather than 11 small-ish councils (scale argument)?
- Change in UK policy under new PM on directly elected mayors

Conclusions

- Not an agenda item for new councils
- Scale/powers of local government still limited
- Nervousness about impact on power sharing
- Outside of Belfast City Council, there is little akin to metropolitan government in UK or RoI terms
- Local government still poor relation of Stormont despite the rhetoric of RPA