

Q&A regarding Municipal Reform

Background

Why do we need to reform Bermuda's municipalities?

Both Hamilton and St. George's must be rejuvenated into becoming vibrant entities in order to attract more visitors and greater investment opportunities for our island and its people. At present, both entities have crumbling infrastructure and empty buildings that do not reflect a thriving city and town that is attractive to both visitors and investors.

What are the current responsibilities of the municipalities?

At present the municipalities are responsible for mainly infrastructure. The available evidence suggests that neither Corporation has the financial and other means to achieve and sustain the vision to rejuvenate the cities. It is also evident that Central Government has greater access to the resources and expertise needed to achieve the vision. Municipalities in other jurisdictions do not just deal with infrastructure; they provide social services, including housing, to their residents. Municipalities in Bermuda do not deliver social services; and the need for social services within the municipalities is growing.

Has Government made it known that it intends to reform Bermuda's municipalities?

Yes, Government first announced its intention to reform Bermuda's municipalities in March 2018 when it deferred the municipal elections for a year in order to start the consultation process. Subsequently, it was also a 2018 Throne Speech initiative: *"The Government is committed to modernising the role of municipalities in today's Bermuda. Consultation with both corporations began in May 2018 and has now been completed. During this session, a bill will be tabled to implement further reforms to the municipalities setting a platform for their growth and development as centres of commerce, tourism and thriving community life."*

Vision for modernizing Bermuda's Municipalities

What is Government's vision for the City of Hamilton?

The vision is a "smart city" infrastructure with a thriving residential centre and entertainment hub with distinct districts.

In order to achieve this vision, the following needs must be met:

- The development of a multi-faceted waterfront;
- Increased city living;
- Increased use of vacant office space;
- Effective traffic management using "smart city" technology;
- Encouraging the development of «districts», e.g. financial, entertainment, restaurant, etc.

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What is Government's vision for the Town of St. George?

It is envisioned that there will be a mega-yacht port and marina with enhanced infrastructure, amenities and activities.

In order to achieve this vision, the following needs must be met:

- A sustainable management plan for the world heritage site with the appropriate legislation and funding that will give the municipality the ability to effectively implement any recommendations that are identified;
- A sustainable year-round (non-seasonal) industry;
- Infrastructure and amenities to address the needs of the community, including its businesses;
- General necessary infrastructure upgrades.

How does Government envision their future relationship with the municipalities?

The Government believes that the two levels of Government (national and municipal) can no longer operate in economic or decision-making silos.

Public Consultation

What are the two options which Government is considering regarding the future of Bermuda's municipalities?

1. Change both corporations to Quangos, leaving each organisation intact as a corporate body but increasing the Government's oversight over key initiatives.
2. Dissolving the corporations, repealing the Municipalities Act and integrating the corporations' various functions into the Government's administrative structure.

What are the details of the current consultation?

In 2018 during the public consultation, the Government committed that a policy document would be "made available for review and comment by the general public, prior to the Government making a decision on the optimal governance model for municipalities in Bermuda"

The policy document which has been created meets the Government's commitment. The document, posted on the Government of Bermuda Citizens Forum (forum.gov.bm), invites the public to comment on the two options which Government is currently considering as they move forward with reforming the municipalities in order to ensure their growth and development. The Consultation period for this will run from February 12 until February 22.

Has there been consultation with key stakeholders/the general public?

Yes. There were regular meetings held between the Government and stakeholders throughout 2018. There was also a public survey which was carried out in September 2018 as well as town hall meetings in the spring (May) and summer (August) of 2018.

