

# Development Committee

Tuesday, 8th September, 2009

## SPECIAL MEETING OF DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor Humphrey (Chairman); and  
Councillors Ekin, N. Kelly, Kirkpatrick, Mullaghan,  
O'Reilly and Rodway.
- In attendance: Mr. T. Husbands, Head of City Events and Venues;  
Mr. G. Millar, Director of Improvement;  
Ms. J. Owens, Operations Manager,  
Waterfront and Ulster Halls;  
Ms. J. Owens, Project Delivery Manager, Ulster Hall;  
Mr. J. Walsh, Principal Solicitor;  
Mr. N. Malcolm, Committee Administrator;  
Mr. C. Carey, City Organist;  
Mr. D. Stelfox, Consarc Design Group; and  
Ms. R. Donnelly, Consarc Design Group.

### Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Campbell, Crozier, Kyle, McCausland and Rodgers.

### Ulster Hall

Pursuant to its decision of 12th August, the Committee undertook a visit to the Ulster Hall to view the building following its recent refurbishment.

### Building Refurbishment

The Members were given a tour of the Hall during which Mr. Stelfox answered questions from the Members. He explained that, due to the poor condition of the roof over a lengthy period of time, a considerable quantity of water had got into the building, particularly in the voids within the walls. However, following the refurbishment work, he was confident that this problem had been rectified. He pointed out to the Members a few locations within the building which were stained as a result of salts in the water being left behind whilst the walls were drying out. He stated that, due to the thickness of some of the walls, it may take up to two years for them to dry out completely. Mr. Stelfox informed the Members that a number of notices had been installed throughout the building which explained the situation to the public and that these had resulted in a decrease in the number of negative comments regarding the damp patches on the walls. He indicated that the contractor would be responsible for making good any defect, including areas of dampness, reported within a year of the handover.

The Director of Improvement informed the Members that, since all of the Council's contracts contained a retention clause, an amount of money would be withheld from the contractor which had been responsible for the refurbishment of the Ulster Hall until the Council was content with the work which had been undertaken.

### **Mulholland Organ**

The Head of City Events and Venues informed the Members that, during the refurbishment of the Ulster Hall, the Mullholland Organ had remained in the building protected by two layers of polythene sheets and a horizontal timber screen. However, a small quantity of water had seeped into the instrument and it had not been possible to establish exactly how this situation had occurred. Mr. Stelfox pointed out that the main contractor had appointed an independent specialist organ contractor to undertake work to protect the instrument prior to the refurbishment work commencing. The City Organist indicated that, following the discovery of the water damage, an independent specialist organ advisor from England had examined the Organ and had concluded that, whilst some minor damage had occurred, it could be easily remedied at minor expense.

In answer to a Member's questions, the City Organist indicated that, in his opinion, the Organ had been protected in the best way possible during the refurbishment of the Hall. However, since the instrument had been sitting in a cold and damp building for two years, whilst the refurbishment was being undertaken, it was to be expected that some work would have to be undertaken to it and the costs of carrying out such work had been included within the costs of refurbishing the building. He indicated that it would take between five and seven days to tune the Organ correctly following the repair work and, due to the programme of events which had been planned for the Ulster Hall, it would be March of next year at the earliest before this tuning would be able to be carried out. This would mean that the instrument should be ready for concert performances in April, 2010.

He informed the Committee that when the specialist organ advisor had examined the instrument he had pointed out that since it had been over thirty years since the Organ had had a major overhaul, such works should be considered in the near future. The City Organist stated that organs should be overhauled approximately every twenty-five years and that the last time that the Mullholland Organ had received such work was in the mid 1970s. Accordingly, he suggested that the Committee might wish to consider having a major overhaul of the Organ undertaken.

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided and agreed that any further discussion in relation to the Mullholland Organ be held once the minor remedial works had been completed to enable concert performances to be held in April, 2010. It was agreed further that a report regarding the refurbishment work at the Ulster Hall and to the Mulholland Organ be presented to the meeting of the Committee which was scheduled to be held on 16th September.

Chairman