



## Belfast City Council

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| <b>Report to:</b>         | Development Committee   |
| <b>Subject:</b>           | Christmas Lights Switch-on  |
| <b>Date:</b>              | 14 May 2008   |
| <b>Reporting Officer:</b> | Marie-Thérèse McGivern, Director of Development, ext 3470   |
| <b>Contact Officer:</b>   | Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459<br>Gerry Copeland, Events Manager, ext 3412 |

### Relevant Background Information

Over that last twenty five years Belfast City Council has developed the annual Christmas Lights Switch-on event. Initially the event involved a number of school choirs and took place in the middle of November, with a small crowd in attendance. The event is now attended by thousands (last year the audience was estimated at 18,000) and involves a range of high profile national and local celebrities. In 2007 the event is estimated to have generated £367,000 for the Council's £80,000 investment in the Lights Switch-on (a return on investment of £1:£4.5). The event also attracts substantial positive media coverage for Belfast City Council and Belfast.

### Key Issues

Members have been presented with options with regard to the timing of the Christmas Lights Switch-on event over the last two months. In April Members agreed that the event should be staged at 7.00 pm. The Events Advisory Panel has now suggested to Council that the event should start no earlier than 7.30 pm. It is suggested that a further thirty minutes would be beneficial by allowing rush-hour commuter traffic to clear and allow for a limited period to physically close the site. Members are reminded that the Events Advisory Panel body incorporates BCCM, PSNI, NIAS, NIFRS, DOE Road Service, BCC Health & Safety, BCC Security, BCC Corporate Communications and Belfast City Council Legal Services.

## **Resource Implications**

### Financial

In October 2007 Members agreed to the overall annual BCC programme and its accompanying budgets. This included the Christmas programme budget of £150,000 which covers this event, Christmas carol events and the festive lighting on and around City Hall.

## **Recommendations**

Members are asked to consider whether they would wish to review the timing of the switch on, taking into account the comments made by the Events Advisory Panel.

## **Abbreviations**

BCC – Belfast City Council  
BCCM - Belfast City Centre Management  
BVCB - Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau  
PSNI – Police Service of Northern Ireland  
NIFRS – Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service  
DOE – Department of the Environment