



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Belfast City Marathon
Date:	14 April 2010
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Tim Husbands, Head of City Events and Venues, ext 1401

Relevant Background Information

The Belfast City Marathon has been organised since 1982 by an organising committee involving Belfast City Council, Athletics Northern Ireland and other partners and sponsors. The event traditionally takes place on the first bank holiday Monday in May. Since 1982, Belfast City Council has co-sponsored the event, with £40,000 allocated for the 2010 event.

In recent years overall participation in the event has risen dramatically:

2000: 6500 2005: 12,500 2009: 17,500

The Chairman of Belfast City Marathon Limited has written to the Council to seek support to change the Marathon event day to a Sunday.

Key Issues

When Belfast City Marathon began in the early 1980s, the May Bank Holiday Monday was a quiet day for the City. This is no longer the case and Bank Holiday Mondays are now for the most part, treated as normal working days. By the nature of the range of events delivered by Belfast City Marathon on that day, there is considerable disruption to transport, traffic and commerce in the City.

Reasons for a switch to a Sunday would include:

1. All major international marathons are held on a Sunday: International marathon participants are accustomed to and prefer to visit and participate in major city marathons over a weekend, enabling them to return home without sacrificing their Monday's at work.

2. The costs of policing, as highlighted by the PSNI would be greatly reduced should the event switch to a Sunday: This has become a major issue affecting the level of support and resources the PSNI can make available to the event.

3. There would be much less disruption to the City on a Sunday when the bulk of the event would be completed by 1pm: Retailers are not open before the 1pm on a Sunday and most other businesses are closed.

In addition to the above, Belfast City Marathon has received letters of support for the change from Translink, DRD Roads Division and Belfast City Centre Management.

The event's key organising partner, Athletics Northern Ireland, would also be in favour of the switch to a Sunday.

Resource Implications

None

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to agree to support Belfast City Marathon's decision to switch the Belfast Marathon event to take place on a Sunday from May 2011 onwards.

Decision Tracking

To provide feedback to Council with regard to final plans for the 2011 event.

Time line: January 2011

Reporting Officer: Tim Husbands

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – Copy of letter from Danny O'Connor, Chairman of Belfast City Marathon Limited to the acting Director of Development (plus supporting documentation).
