



<b>Report to:</b>	Shadow SP&R Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Proposal for Web Summit event at St George's Market
<b>Date:</b>	20 February 2015
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
<b>Contact Officers:</b>	Clodagh Cassin, Markets Development Manager, ext 5455

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	Members will be aware that St George's Market currently operates as a market three days per week – Friday, Saturday and Sunday. On non-market days, the market is available for hire for other events and this ensures that it can generate an income for the council outside of market days.
1.2	A request has now been received from Visit Belfast to hold an event on four non-market days (i.e. Monday to Thursday, 15-18 June 2015). However the event set-up and break-down will require access to the market before and after the main event (i.e. Sunday 14 June and Friday 19 June). This would have the effect of closing St George's as a market on those two days.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	Members will be aware that the Integrated Tourism Strategy places a significant emphasis on the importance of business tourism to the city. Investment in facilities such as the new Waterfront Conference and Exhibition Centre are intended to support an increase in the volume and value of business tourism, thereby generating knock-on benefits for the local hospitality sector in particular.
2.2	The tourism strategy also focuses on the need to both develop and attract a number of international events that will draw visitors to the city and create a positive image and profile of Belfast. It suggests that there are opportunities to align these events to the business sectors in which the city has real strength, such as creative industries, software and IT and financial services software.
2.3	The Web Summit is an international business event that has taken place in Dublin each year since 2010. Growing from an event that attracted 500 people in its first year, the 2014 event attracted 22,000 visitors to the city for a three day event that included a range of side-events all across the city. The cumulative impact in terms of tourism spend is significant and it is one of the largest events that takes place in Dublin each year.

2.4	The organisers of the Web Summit also run a number of related events at various locations across the world throughout the year. These are focused on specific elements of the tech industry. The organisers are seeking to develop a new event and have identified Belfast as their preferred venue for the event.
2.5	The event is actually comprised of two related events called MoneyConf and EnterConf. It focuses on the financial services software and enterprise software industries – areas in which Belfast is developing a niche offer, with the presence of a number of both multi-national and indigenous businesses operating on a global scale. It will run over a period of 4 days and organisers expect to attract 2000 delegates per day over the 4 days. The event could generate up to £4million in economic impact and could help place Belfast on the international stage as a location for global tech-based events.
2.6	The organisers have identified St George's Market as their preferred venue. Visit Belfast have confirmed that this is the only venue that provides adequate conference and exhibition space for the event. The proposal is to run the Money Conf event on Monday 15 June and Tuesday 16 June. The changeover will then take place on Wednesday 16 June and the EnterConf event will take place on Thursday 18 June and Friday 19 June. The strike down from the EnterConf event will happen after the event on Friday, with a view to having the market ready for traders to access it for business on Saturday 20 June. Therefore, if members were to agree to hosting the event, this would have an impact on two trading days, namely Sunday 14 <sup>th</sup> and Friday 19 <sup>th</sup> June 2015 and would mean that the market could not function on those days.
2.7	This situation has never previously arisen as events have always been confined to non-market days. If members were to agree to not hold the market, consideration would need to be given to managing the relationship with the 180 traders who trade there daily and communicating the message to the 5,000 visitors who come to the market each day.
2.8	Visit Belfast had been looking at opportunities for re-locating the market to other locations across the city but this would present significant logistical challenges and there would probably be substantial cost implications – which have not been taken into account by any party at this stage. Likewise, officers looked into the potential of re-locating the market to Waterfront Hall for those two days but this was not possible, largely due to logistical reasons.
2.9	At present, the organisers have confirmed that they want Belfast to host the event and they are keen to launch it as soon as possible to ensure maximum attendance. However officers have advised them that this will not be possible until there is a decision from elected members as to whether or not it will be feasible at St George's.
2.10	The organisers have also suggested that, if the event is a success, it is their intention to look at anchoring the event in Belfast for at least three years, and they have confirmed that they would expect to grow the audience to 15,000 attendees by that point. Given the increasing numbers, the organisers have looked at the new Waterfront Hall as a possible location for next year's event. While they are interested, the June dates are already provisionally reserved at this point so they may have to look at alternative dates.

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	Venue hire will generate around £10,000 in income to the council. However, if the two market days were to be cancelled, this would represent a loss of income of around £5,000 from traders.
3.2	If the market traders were to be relocated to another area, there would be significant cost implications. These have not be calculated, and it has not been confirmed how these costs would be met, or who would be responsible for meeting the costs.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
	No specific equality and good relations implications.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Note the request to hold the Web Summit MoneyConf and EnterConf events in St George's Market from 15-19 June 2015</li> <li>- Note that the event will require set-up and break-down time either side of the main programme, and that this would mean that the venue could not function as a market on Sunday 14 June and Friday 19 June</li> <li>- Consider how they wish to deal with this request.</li> </ul>

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
Timeline:	June 2015                      Reporting Officer: John McGrillen