



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee.
Subject:	Request from Joint Unionist Centenary Committee
Date:	10 November 2011
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure.
Contact Officer:	Emer Boyle, Policy and Business Development Manager

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The Parks and Leisure Committee, at its meeting in September 2011 considered a request from the Joint Unionist Centenary Committee (UCC), which is based at West Belfast Orange Hall, Shankill Road Belfast.
1.2	The original Unionist Centenary Committee (UCC) request dated 28 August 2011 was to have a parade to Strangford Playing Fields in south Belfast, but at the council meeting on 3 October this request was amended to refer to Ormeau Park.
1.3	Following the council meeting, the Good Relations Manager and the Policy and Business Development Manager from Parks and Leisure Department met three representatives from the UCC on Monday 10 October to clarify the detail of the application.
1.4	The Unionist Centenary Committee (UCC) was set up at the end of 2009 as an umbrella group and consists of the following stakeholders: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 36th Ulster Division Memorial Association• Apprentice Boys of Derry• Confederation of Ulster Bands• Democratic Unionist Party• Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland• Independent Loyal Orange Institution• Progressive Unionist Party• Regimental Bands Association• Somme Association, Conlig• Traditional Unionist Voice• Ulster Defence Union 1893 Committee• Ulster Unionist Party.
1.5	The purpose of the UCC is: <i>“to commemorate the Centenary of the Balmoral Review which was held to demonstrate Unionist opposition to Home Rule for Ireland, and to do this in a manner which is factually correct and open to all.”</i>

	<p>The additional information gleaned from the meeting with the UCC and the revised request and location have since been discussed at the meeting of the Council's Historic Centenaries Working Group on 17 October and at a special meeting of the same group on Wednesday 26 October, when four representatives of the UCC were in attendance.</p>
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2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>The UCC representatives stated that Windsor Park had been their original choice of venue but this was deemed unsuitable. Strangford Playing Fields had been second choice but this was later considered too small to host an event which might attract up to 25,000 people. Barnett Demesne had been considered, since this is the usual destination for the annual 12 July demonstration, but the UCC had decided that the considerable distance involved - 6 miles to and from the city centre - made this impractical.</p>
2.2	<p>Their application had therefore been altered to Ormeau Park. This was their preferred option, primarily due to its close proximity to the city centre, ease of access for all and in their view would allow the proposed parade and entertainment to have minimal impact on local communities, traffic or policing.</p>
2.3	<p>The UCC members stated that the parade would initiate from 5 meeting points from Orange Halls located at Clifton Street, Alexandra Park Avenue, Sandy Row, Shankill Road and Albertbridge Road. They envisaged that the main parade would start at 10:00 am, making its way to Ormeau Park for the start of the main events at 12:00 noon.</p>
2.4	<p>At Ormeau Park itself a platform party would review a march past of the parade, to be followed by a brief religious service, in accordance with the original 1912 event. Entertainment would carry on through the afternoon and the main parade would leave the park around 5:00pm whilst the fairground element and entertainment would continue into the evening.</p>
2.5	<p>The UCC stressed that this was intended to be an alcohol-free event and would seek assistance from the police and park staff in the management of the event; all stall holders, caterers and traders at the event would be certified in the usual manner. The UCC proposed that parking for essential parade traffic, including some vintage vehicles, would be at the Ozone site and they would organise their own event marshals on site.</p>
2.6	<p>At the meeting of the Centenaries Working Group on 25 October, representatives from the UCC also outlined their intentions to have a "Cultural Village" of tented workshops and displays in the park with activities including music, dancing etc. Since the 25 October the UCC has communicated that they would like to extend the fairground and cultural village element to the Friday night if possible (text of email attached in Appendix 2).</p>
2.7	<p>The key uncertainty around the event is the number expected. Since no other demonstrations in NI are currently planned for that day the event could potentially attract up to 25,000+ attendees.</p>

<p>2.8</p> <p>2.9</p> <p>2.10</p>	<p>When council staff met with the UCC representatives, essential factors considered were the size, scope, location and all health and safety aspects of the proposed event. An event of this size would require a full events plan and would have to conform to the conditions set out in the Parks policy for “large scale concerts and music festivals”.</p> <p>In addition, normally an application for an event on this scale would be from a commercial promoter and a ‘bond of intent’ would be required to be to confirm the booking of the venue and associated set-up and take-down time and is refundable, as long as no significant damage is incurred during the event. In these circumstances, given the non-commercial nature of the organiser, it is not proposed to require a bond of intent.</p> <p>The UCC stressed that this was not an Orange Order demonstration; they hoped it would be an open, non-contentious, welcoming community event in which all elements of the local community could participate positively. Their plans were provisional at present but the UCC would keep all interested parties, including the police and Parades Commission, informed of ongoing developments.</p> <p>After consideration, the council’s Historic Centenaries Working Group agreed to recommend to the Parks and Leisure Committee that approval be granted for this request in line with the proviso detailed in the September Committee report, i.e.:</p> <p><i>“that:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. the event organisers resolve all operational issues to the council’s satisfaction;</i> <i>2. an appropriate legal agreement prepared by the Town Solicitor and Assistant Chief Executive is completed;</i> <i>3. the event organisers meet all statutory requirements including entertainment licensing; and</i> <i>4. the event organisers ensure that all health and safety requirements are met to the council’s satisfaction.”</i> <p>and subject to a number of further conditions, namely that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there are no displays of paramilitary emblems or regalia; • no national flags or symbols are burnt or defaced; and • all the requirements of the council’s events plan are fully complied with.
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<p>3</p> <p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p>	<p>Resource Implications</p> <p><u>Financial</u> There are no financial contributions requested at this stage.</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u> There are likely to be some additional staffing and planning implications which should be able to be accommodated through our normal event management process.</p> <p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u> Depending on scale of event and weather, some repair to Ormeau Park terrain may be required.</p>
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4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	<p>The council has established an Historic Centenaries Working Group, which reports to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee, to co-ordinate its work in this area. The Working Group has agreed that the forthcoming <i>Decade of Centenaries, 2012-2022</i>, provides an opportunity for the council to contribute to a better understanding of the past and to promote respect for the complexity of our shared history.</p> <p>The Historic Centenaries Working Group has already discussed a programme of events for the first period in the decade 2012-2014, and has recommended to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee that the Centenary of the Signing of the Covenant should be one of the first major events to be marked, with the commissioning of an exhibition in the City Hall plus a number of individual events.</p> <p>All of the proposals currently under consideration within the programme would have positive implications in terms of the promotion of equality and good relations, if undertaken in an inclusive manner. In line with this rationale, through the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee, the council has committed to the set of principles attached at Appendix 3 – and “<i>will not support events or activities that could be deemed to be triumphalist, to deepen or harden existing divisions, or belittle or demonise other groups.</i>”</p>
5	Recommendations
5.1	<p>That the Parks and Leisure Committee approve the recommendation of the Historic Centenaries Working Group in line with the proviso detailed in the September Committee report (detailed at section 2.10 above) and subject to a number of further conditions (the first two of which have been in place for some years in relation to the Bonfire Management Programme), namely that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there are no displays of paramilitary emblems or regalia • no national flags or symbols are burnt or defaced • all the requirements of the council’s Events Plan are fully complied with.
6	Decision Tracking
	City Park Manager and Principal Parks and Cemeteries Services Manager to ensure actions are completed by May 2012.
7	Key to Abbreviations
	JUCC: Joint Unionist Centenary Committee
8	Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1: Letter from Joint Unionist Centenary Committee</p> <p>Appendix 2: Copy of text from email re – extension of plans for tented village to the Friday evening.</p> <p>Appendix 3 : Copy of Centenaries Working Group – Agreed Principles</p>