



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Arrangements for the Somme Anniversary Ceremony, July 2008
Date:	Friday, 23 rd May, 2008
Reporting Officer:	Mr. Liam Steele, Head of Committee and Members' Services (ext. 6325)
Contact Officer:	Ms. Sandra Robinson, Lord Mayor's Principal Officer (ext. 6244)

Relevant Background Information

Members will recall that the annual Somme Ceremony, takes place at the Cenotaph in the grounds of City Hall in July of each year. A Special Meeting of Council precedes the ceremony and it has been customary for the City Hall to be used as a mustering point for all those involved in the formal proceedings.

Although the City Hall will be closed for the Ceremony access is permitted to the Garden of Remembrance. The closure of the City Hall will, however, necessitate arrangements being made to provide an alternative venue which will act as a mustering point for those involved and will also prove suitable to host a suitable level of hospitality.

Key Issues

An appropriate mustering point is crucial in achieving a successful event. The procession consists of approximately 200 participants who all process in a specific order in their relative groups.

A number of factors were taken into account in determining potential venues, including: cost, accessibility and distance to the Cenotaph, suitability as a mustering point and ability to provide post event hospitality.

Following consideration of all potential venues within the vicinity of the Cenotaph, the Assembly Buildings at Church House, Fisherwick Place, proved to be the most suitable. There will be no cost for the use of the buildings, it contains individual function rooms which are suitable for the needs of the participants, it has previously been used as a mustering point for similar processions in the city centre and car parking is available in the grounds of the Royal Belfast Academic Institution, situated directly across the road from Church House.

If using Church House, an application would have to be made to the Parades Commission requesting that the procession leave from Wellington Street, proceed up Queen Street before turning right into Wellington Place to make the short walk to the

front gates of the City Hall. This route is slightly longer than the previous one from the Council Chamber in the City Hall to the Cenotaph but is not significantly so and provides an opportunity for the Associations taking part, the Band and Guard to process the short distance through the City.

Discussions have taken place with representatives from the Royal British Legion who advise that all those participating in the Ceremony are able-bodied and should not have any difficulties making this short journey. Following the Ceremony the procession would return to Church House where tea/coffee and light refreshments would be provided.

This proposal meets with the approval of the PSNI who have confirmed that there will be no difficulty associated with implementing the appropriate traffic and security measures.

Church House would also be suitable in that it could accommodate the holding of the Special Meeting of the Council which precedes the Somme Ceremony, thus removing the need to hold a meeting in the current Civic Headquarters at Adelaide Exchange and thereafter merging the Councillors group with the other participants and moving to the City Hall

Church House is considered to be the most appropriate venue to use as a mustering point prior to the Somme Ceremony based on the issues outlined above and having had the opportunity to view its facilities and make objective comparisons to other venues.

Resource Implications

Not applicable

Recommendations

To approve the use of Assembly Buildings, Church House, to act as a venue for the Special Meeting of Council prior to the Somme Ceremony on 1 July, 2008 and to be used to provide tea/coffee and light refreshments following the formal proceedings.
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Key to Abbreviations

Not applicable

Documents Attached

Not applicable
