



BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Use of City Hall grounds for Proms in the Park concert on 13th Sept 2008
Date:	20 th June 2008
Reporting Officer:	Director of Corporate Services
Contact Officer:	Gerry Copeland – Events Manager – Ext.3412

Relevant background information

As Members will be aware, the Committee has delegated authority for routine requests for use of the City Hall grounds etc. to the Director of Corporate Services on the basis of an agreed set of criteria, and the majority of requests are now dealt with via this mechanism. However it was recognised that there would be occasions on which the nature, scale and/or scope of the request means that it is appropriate to place the matter directly before the Committee. The request detailed below falls into this category, and the direction of the Committee is therefore sought.

Beginning in 2001 and through to 2006 Belfast City Council hosted the BBC Proms in the Park concert in the grounds of City Hall. During this period the event attracted just under 30,000 people and was broadcast to over 5 million people via BBC national television and the BBC World Service. The event has also generated an estimated £300,000 in additional economic activity in the city for each year it has been staged in Belfast. In 2007 the event was moved outside Belfast due to the closure of City Hall which affected changing facilities for the event.

Plans to host the event in 2008 at Queen's University were agreed by the Development Committee in October 2007, along with £80,000 of Council funding. However, due to operational difficulties, Queen's University are now unable to accommodate the event and the BBC have therefore requested that the City Hall grounds be used for the concert. This will entail part-closure of the grounds from **6th to 19th September**, with the concert itself being staged on **Saturday 13th September 2008**. Details of the BBC request to use the City Hall in 2008 have been presented and endorsed by the Development Committee at its meeting of June 2008.

Key Issues

The following issues are key:-

Additional Facilities

The obstacles to hosting the event in 2007 (i.e. changing facilities for artists and orchestra etc) have been overcome, as the BBC intend to hire rooms in city centre hotels and ferry performers to the City Hall using coaches.

Closure of City Hall Ground

It would be proposed to close only half of the City Hall Grounds to the public initially, with the complete grounds being closed to the public from the evening of Friday 12th September 2008.

Car Parking

The BBC has requested that remaining car parking on the Donegal Square East side of City Hall be utilised for broadcast vehicles from 11 September to 14th September 2008. The BBC has offered the Council alternative city centre car parking within BBC facilities.

Resources Implications**Financial**

Approval of **£80,000** for the event has been included in the Development Department's operational budget, and specific approval for the event was secured as part of the Council's annual events programme at the Development Committee meeting of October 2007.

Human Resources

The BCC will provide all necessary security and stewarding staff at their expense.

Asset & other implications

The BCC have indemnified the Council in respect of any damage to the lawns or surrounding areas.

Recommendations & Decisions

Members are requested to approve the use of the City Hall grounds from 6th to 19th September 2008. This period covers the set-up, the concert itself and the subsequent de-rigging of the Proms concert infrastructure and equipment.

Key to Abbreviations

None.

Documents attached

None.