



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Review of the use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality Policy
Date:	Friday, 7 th August, 2009
Reporting Officer:	Mr. Liam Steele, Head of Committee and Members' Services (ext. 6325)
Contact Officer:	Mr. Gareth Quinn, Development Officer (ext. 6316)

Relevant Background Information

Members may recall that the Committee, at its meeting on 22nd May, 2009, approved the Council's Corporate Plan for 2009/10 which includes the replacement of the Corporate Strategic Objectives with six 'key themes'. Prior to the approval of the Corporate Plan, the criteria used to determine which events should be granted the use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality was based on organisations demonstrating how their event contributed significantly to the achievement of one or more of the Corporate Strategic Objectives.

Further to this, the Committee, at its meeting on 19th June, 2009, discussed the importance of increasing the number of events organised by community and voluntary groups which take place within the City Hall. The Committee expressed its desire to increase this number so that all the people of Belfast would have an opportunity to enjoy the City Hall.

Key Issues

Implications on the criteria of the Corporate Plan 09/10

The criteria which has been in use since October 2003 has provided an effective framework which has allowed Members to take informed decisions on the use of the City Hall and the granting of hospitality.

The updated Corporate Plan includes the introduction of the following six 'key themes':

- City Leadership - strong, fair, together;
- Better care for Belfast's environment ;
- Better opportunities for success across the city;
- Better support for people and communities;
- Better Services – listening and delivering; and
- Better Value for Money – i.e. a “can-do”, accountable and efficient Council.

The 'key themes' which have been introduced outline the key priority areas for the Council and it is recommended that the criteria should reflect this by requesting organisations wishing to use the City Hall to demonstrate how their event will contribute substantially to the achievement of one or more of the Council's 'key themes'.

Community and voluntary groups requesting to use the City Hall

The Committee, at its meeting on 26th September, 2003, agreed to approve the revised policy in respect of the criteria for the use of the City Hall and the provision of Civic Hospitality. The policy included a specific application process for community and voluntary groups wishing to use the City Hall and avail of 'Community Hospitality', with organisations encouraged to apply annually through advertisements in the local print media.

At its meeting on 18th August, 2006, the Committee considered, because only five applications had been received over the previous two years and to avoid duplication in operating two procedures, a review of the criteria be undertaken to establish whether the current policy could be amended to make provision for Community Hospitality. This would mean that a separate process would not be required, saving the Council advertising expenses and administration costs, whilst improving the efficiency of the overall process. The Committee subsequently agreed to amend the criteria so as to facilitate applications from community and voluntary organisations through the procedure applied to all groups but with a specific section being added to the application form to cater for the Community and Voluntary Sector.

In the past it became apparent that community and voluntary groups did not always have the capacity to organise large-scale events in the City Hall. However, it has been the practice in the past to offer encouragement to such groups to organise events which will be within their scope.

In addition, since one of the 'key themes' of the current Corporate Plan is 'Better support for people and communities', organisations working in the community and voluntary field will be given the opportunity to use the City Hall by demonstrating how they will contribute substantially and specifically to the achievement of this theme.

Resource Implications

Not applicable.

Recommendations

To agree to the amendment of the criteria for the use of the City Hall and the provision of civic hospitality to reflect the achievement of the Council's key objectives to determine the events which should be held in the City Hall.

Decision Tracking

If the Committee adopts the recommendation the relevant revisions will be implemented and the application form and accompanying guidance notes will be amended accordingly.

Officer responsible – Mr. Gareth Quinn, Development Officer