



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	2011 Somme Pilgrimage
Date:	24th September, 2010
Reporting Officer:	Mr. S. McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (extension 6314)
Contact Officer:	Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer (extension 6313)

Relevant Background Information

Correspondence has been received from the Somme Association enquiring if the Council would wish to be represented on the 2011 Pilgrimage to the Somme, France from 28th June until 2nd July, 2011. The Somme Pilgrimage, to mark the 95th Anniversary of the battle, will follow the route taken by both the 36th (Ulster) and 16th (Irish) Divisions during their service in the first world war. Services of Commemoration will be held in both Thiepval and Guillemont, in addition to attendance at the Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate, Ypres.

Key Issues

In previous years the Committee has authorised the attendance on the Somme tour of a representative of each of the Party Groupings on the Council. Members who have attended have found the event to be informative and worthwhile in that several of the ceremonial occasions were attended by many other dignitaries and officials, which afforded an opportunity for contacts to be made and relations to be developed on a range of topics and for the profile and image of Belfast to be promoted.

Members will be aware that places on the Pilgrimage are limited and, in previous years, late replies have resulted in Members failing to obtain a place on the tour. Members will be aware also that the Local Government Elections will be held in May, 2011 and, if the Committee were minded to approve attendance at the event, no confirmation of names will be able to be submitted until that time.

Therefore, it would be the intention to book one place for each of the current Party Groupings on the Council, which would require a deposit of £100 per person, with confirmation of those attending being sought after the Local Government Elections in May 2011.

It should be noted that the Somme Pilgrimage coincides with the Council's own Somme Remembrance ceremony and Members who attend the tour would be unable to be in attendance at that event.

Resource Implications

Financial

The cost per person of attendance is approximately £595 per person (including deposit) plus the appropriate subsistence allowance, provision for which will be made within the revenue estimates.

Human Resource

There are no Human Resource implications associated with this report.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to approve the attendance on the tour of a representative of each of the party groupings on the Council and the Chief Executive (or his nominee) and to authorise the payment of the appropriate travel and subsistence allowances in connections therewith.

Decision Tracking

Time: October, 2010 – Appropriate arrangements will be made following Council ratification

Officer responsible: Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer