



Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Proposed sculpture to mark the Belfast Blitz
Date:	Friday 10 December 2010
Reporting Officer:	Hazel Francey, Good Relations Manager

Relevant Background Information	
1.1	In August, the Chief Executive held a meeting with Colonel CT Hogg and Major Potter from the NI War Memorial organisation, to discuss their request that a major civic memorial should be erected in Belfast to mark the 70 th anniversary of the Belfast Blitz, which will be in April 2011.
1.2	Although there were a number of air-raids, the most serious were on the nights of 15-16 April and 4 May 1941. The Luftwaffe caused massive damage, both to the city's densely populated inner city housing stock and to its industrial heartland. Almost 1000 people were killed in the raids and thousands injured. More than half the city's housing stock was damaged, leaving thousands homeless. Outside London, no other city in the UK suffered as much loss of civilian life in a single night.
1.3	To commemorate this tragic loss of life, the NI War Memorial representatives requested that the Council erect an appropriate civic memorial at the front of the City Hall, in the round flower bed, preferably in the style of the VC Magennis pillar. The Chief Executive advised them to submit their request in writing, with a description of their proposed memorial and associated costs etc. They were advised to do this as quickly as possible, since planning permission and approvals from the heritage authorities would be required.
1.4	The NI War Memorial representatives submitted a formal request regarding a Blitz memorial in October. This outlined plans for a pillar-style memorial, 6 feet high, in front of the statue to Queen Victoria, where it could be in full public view. At this time, they recognised that it would not be possible to have the memorial completed by April 2011 and suggested that it should be ready for unveiling and dedication in April 2012, the 71 st anniversary. The Association estimated that it should cost in the region of £20,000 and stated that they were prepared to contribute 50% of that cost.

Key Issues	
2.1	The Council's Project Manager, Sam Graham, and the consultant architect for the City Hall, Dawson Stelfox, met to discuss this proposal and examine the proposed location. They were of the firm view that the Historic Buildings Branch would be unlikely to grant approval for any memorial in such a prominent location. They agreed that it might be possible to place a smaller statue on the low stone wall at the side of the porte cochère. The architect suggested that, rather than commissioning a new piece, a copy of the

	existing bronze piece by the distinguished artist John Sherlock (currently in the NI War Memorial headquarters building) might be appropriate for this site. This bronze, entitled "Blitz survivors" is half scale and depicts a woman guiding her child through the rubble of the city on the morning after the raids.
2.2	The City Hall already contains two artefacts that mark the Blitz. A plaque in the Great Hall marks its re-opening after the war and a portrait of a former Lord Mayor, damaged in the same raid, was deliberately left unrestored as a relic of the wartime damage.
2.3	Members are requested for their views as to whether another memorial to the Blitz should be erected and if so, should this be in the City Hall, its grounds or elsewhere in the city. The Committee is also asked to consider what form this memorial should take.
2.4	Members may be aware that the Director of Property and Projects has been in discussions with the University of Ulster regarding their new site in north Belfast and it is possible that development there at Cathedral Gardens/Buoys Park, could include a new piece of public art, subject to the approval of the Parks Committee and possibly in partnership with the University authorities. Members might consider this to be a more appropriate location for a Blitz memorial sculpture, since this was one of the neighbourhoods most severely devastated.

Resource Implications	
3.1	The NI War Memorial representatives have agreed that a copy of their bronze Sherlock sculpture could be re-cast and installed in this prime location. As before, they are prepared to contribute 50% of the cost, which they estimate at £20,000.
3.2	Council staff estimate that the full cost of a duplicate of the bronze Sherlock sculpture would actually be in the region of £25,000, since it would have to include the necessary preparation of the base, lighting, fixing details and an appropriate plaque. Planning permission would still be required and it is unlikely that even the replica sculpture could be installed for April 2011. The Council's share of the costs are not included in current budgets.

Equality and Good Relations Implications	
4.1	The Blitz affected every community in Belfast. A sculpture on this theme could provide an opportunity for communities to come together in joint remembrance of this tragic event as part of our shared history.

Decision required	
5.1	<p>It now appears unlikely that it will be possible for any memorial to be in place for April 2011 (70th anniversary). The Committee is requested to give its views as to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whether the Council wishes to support the proposal for a Blitz memorial as requested • whether the Council should support the proposal for the replica bronze Sherlock as outlined above • whether such a memorial would be best placed within the City Hall grounds • whether the Director of Property and Projects should investigate the possibility of commissioning a new memorial, possibly in partnership with another agency, to be placed in a locality of Belfast that was heavily bombed in 1941.

Decision Tracking	
The Director of Property & Projects will be responsible for managing this project, if agreed.	