



Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Review of future use and management of the City Hall
Date:	4 February 2011
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1.0	<u>BACKGROUND INFORMATION</u>
1.1	The Strategic Policy & Resources Committee agreed, at its meeting on 10 th December 2010, to hold a special meeting to discuss the future use and management of the City Hall to allow time for discussion on this detailed piece of work.
1.2	This report therefore sets out for Members' consideration some of the early findings and issues which have emerged from an initial internal review undertaken of the current and potential future use and management of the City Hall (e.g. covering areas such as the criteria for use, process for booking events, catering and tours within City Hall). The report sets out potential options available in respect to such issues and seeks to explore with Members how they would wish to move forward.
2.0	<u>KEY ISSUES</u>
2.1	The City Hall is the most prestigious building in Belfast and is one of the most instantly recognisable symbols of the city. It has a unique, iconic status and is very much seen as the 'heart of the city'. As Belfast's most impressive asset it is crucial that the City Hall is protected and maintained for current and future generations to enjoy.
2.2	Members will be aware that while there are currently a number of established policies and processes in place for the use and management of the City Hall many of these policies were created when the City Hall was less frequently used and/or they predate the Council's current organisational and decision-making structures. It is therefore important that a robust framework is put in place which contains the policies and processes needed to govern its future role, management and use.
2.3	In recognition of this an internal review was undertaken to examine the current practices and processes and to identify, for Members consideration, potential options for improvements in moving forward. This review was undertaken in consultation/liaison with staff from departments and services across the Council including Chief Officer's, Democratic and Legal Services, the Facilities Management Unit, the Events Unit and the Culture & Arts Unit.
2.4	A detailed report on the review is attached at Appendix 1 and outlines a series of the high-level concerns in respect to the current management and governance arrangements in place for the City Hall and examines in detail a number of key inter-related issues including - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Criteria for the use of the City Hall - Scope to introduce a policy for the charging of function room hire in City Hall - Booking of events in the City Hall - Catering for City Hall events - City Hall Tours - City Hall Grounds – criteria for the use of City Hall grounds, accountability and scope to introduce charging for use of the City Hall grounds

2.5	The report sets out in detail the current position with regard to each policy area; examines good practice applied elsewhere; outlines the potential options available; and in certain cases makes recommendations where appropriate.
2.6	A high-level summary of the key issues and proposals emerging from the review are set out below for Members consideration. On the basis of the initial deliberations of Members on the issues and options outlined, and were appropriate, further work would be undertaken to explore the implications of progressing with any preferred option(s). Accordingly, a further report would be submitted for the future consideration of the Committee.
3.0	<u>SUMMARY OF EMERGING ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS</u>
3.1	FUTURE ROLE OF THE CITY HALL?
3.1.1	The review undertaken and the associated policy areas, issues and options presented within this paper fundamentally raise the key question as to <i>‘What is/should be the role of the City Hall and what sort of building do Members want the City Hall to be?’</i>
3.1.2	Members are therefore asked first and foremost to consider what the fundamental principles should be for governing the future use and management of the City Hall e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - should it remain an open, accessible, free building for all?; - should the Council seek to ensure that its costs are covered as a minimum so that these are not passed onto the ratepayer?; or - should it operate on a more commercial type basis?.
3.1.3	Members will note that any decision as to the issues associated with the future use and management of the City Hall will be driven by the position taken by Members in respect to the anticipated future role of the City Hall.
3.2	CRITERIA FOR THE USE OF THE CITY HALL
3.2.1	It is recommended that Members:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ agree that the criteria for the use of City Hall be reviewed and revised to take account of the Council’s new corporate objectives as set out within the new Corporate Plan (when agreed) and Members’ aspirations for the future use of City Hall; ▪ note that changes to the criteria will need to be reflected in the accompanying application form for the use of the City Hall; ▪ consider whether they would wish to retain the current scheme of delegation or extend the delegated authority for granting of external events in the City Hall to the Director of Property & Projects, except in those circumstances whereby an event is deemed to be contentious. This approach will help streamline the process for booking and avoid unnecessary business being brought to Committee for consideration. It is also important to note that the overwhelming majority of decisions taken by Committee in regards to the use of the City Hall are passed unanimously.
3.4	BOOKING OF EVENTS IN CITY HALL
3.4.1	Options outlined in the detailed report attached at Appendix 1 include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain the current policy for the booking of external events 2. Centralise the booking of all (both external and internal) events within a single section (suggested to be within the Civic HQ – Facilities Management Section)

3.4.2	<p>It is recommended that Members-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ note that whilst the existing process for the booking of rooms by external organisations has worked well to date, it predates the Council's current organisational structure and currently means that an event organiser has to liaise with two services in relation to a single event; ▪ consider whether the process for booking rooms by external organisations should be centralised within the Civic HQ Section in the Department of Property & Projects as this Department has responsibility for the day to day management of the City Hall. This would create a unified booking process, both operationally and administratively; ▪ should Members agree to a streamlined and centralised process, that a Reference Panel be established to oversee the use and management of the City Hall including the booking process for events. This Panel will assess applications; ensuring challenge and accountability; and reporting to Committee as necessary. It is suggested that the Reference Panel would be chaired by the Director of Property & Projects and would have representatives from Democratic and Legal Services, the Chief Executive's Department, Good Relations and Facilities Management. The proposed Terms of Reference for this Panel will be brought back to Committee. <p>Members will appreciate that there is a crucial element of judgement involved with the booking of rooms by external organisations. It is therefore important that the existing close liaison with the Democratic Services Section remains an integral and intrinsic part of the consideration process and the proposed Reference Panel. It would be the intention that the role of the Reference Panel would be keep under review.</p>
3.5	<p>POLICY FOR CHARGING FOR FUNCTIONS ROOMS IN THE CITY HALL</p>
3.5.1	<p>Options outlined in the detailed report attached at Appendix 1 include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain the current policy of not charging for any room hire within the City Hall 2. Reinstate the policy previously agreed by Committee in 1993 for the charging of function rooms (it should be noted that this charge was only for evening events and it was estimated at the time that this charge would only apply to about 5% of evening events) 3. Examine the potential for charging for room hire for all external organisations. In line with best practice this could include a '<i>not for profit, not for loss</i>' scenario with subsidised rates for charity/voluntary organisations
3.5.2	<p>It is recommended that Members -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ note the previous Committee decisions in 1993 and 2003 which related to agreeing to charge external organisations for room hire ▪ consider whether a revised charging policy should be developed for those City Hall functions where there is a commercial interest - with further information to be brought back to Committee on an appropriate scale of charges including a '<i>not for profit, not for loss</i>' scenario in line with best practice
3.6	<p>CATERING AT CITY HALL EVENTS</p>
3.6.1	<p>Options outlined in the detailed report attached at Appendix 1 include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bring all catering in house 2. Have a select 'call-off' list of a small number of caterers appointed through a competitive tendering process 3. Appoint a single caterer for all events within the City Hall
3.6.2	<p>It is recommended that Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ agree to further exploration be given to the viability of each of the options outlined.

3.7	TOURS
3.7.1	<p>Options outlined in the detailed report attached at Appendix 1 include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain the current policy of not charging for either public or private tours 2. Introduce a charge for <i>all</i> tour participants on both public and private tours 3. Introduce a charge for private pre-booked tours - this would levied on pre-booked tours organised through a tour operator and would be levied on the tour operator, not the individual tourist 4. Keep all tours free of charge but install a donation/tip box where tour participants will be free to decide if they wish to donate or not
3.7.2	<p>It is recommended that Members:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ consider whether tours should remain free of charge, in line with current practice, or if a charge should be levied; ▪ note that if a decision was taken to introduce a charge further work would then need to be carried out to establish an appropriate scale of charging; and ▪ Members are asked to note that a combination of options could also be introduced if considered to be more appropriate.
3.8	CITY HALL GROUNDS
	<i>Criteria for the use of City Hall Grounds</i>
3.8.1	<p>It is recommended that Members -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ agree that the criteria for the use of the City Hall grounds be reviewed and updated in line with the proposed review of the criteria for the use of the City Hall Building.
	<i>Policy for charging for events in the City Hall grounds</i>
3.8.2	<p>It is recommended that Members -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ consider whether a charging policy should be introduced for the use of City Hall Grounds for events, possibly in line with the charges that are applied for events in the Council's parks and open spaces
	<i>Accountability and decision-making</i>
3.8.3	<p>It is recommended that -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ all future requests (to be completed via an enhanced application form) for use of the grounds of the City Hall must be submitted through the Director of Property & Projects who has delegated authority in this regard. This includes both internal and external requests for the use of the grounds. The Director of Property & Projects will continue to report regularly to Committee on events. ▪ the Standing Orders are clarified to ensure that is explicit that the management of the City Hall Grounds is the responsibility of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee through the Director of Property & Projects – this will help to remove any ambiguity and ensure that decisions re the use of the grounds are brought to the SP&R committee. This will also help to ensure co-ordination between events in the grounds of the City hall and within the Hall itself and ensure that are events are co-ordinated and minimise the risk to the Council of events being double-booked etc

9.0	Resource Implications
9.1	Members are asked to note that the resource implications of the options outlined above have not been quantified as the final resource implications (financial and human) will be dependent on the options which Members chose in relation to each policy area. Further work will be carried out in relation to these areas when Members have agreed the way forward.
10.0	Recommendations
	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Note the contents of this report and the detailed options paper attached; and ii) Consider the options and recommendations for each of the policy areas outlined in the report above including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - consider whether the Council should seek to ensure that its costs are covered as a minimum so that these are not passed onto the ratepayer; - consider whether they would wish to retain the current scheme of delegation or extend the delegated authority for granting of external events in the City Hall to the Director of Property & Projects, except in those circumstances whereby an event is deemed to be contentious; - centralise the booking of all (both external and internal) events within a single section (suggested to be within the Civic HQ – Facilities Management Section); - should Members agree to a streamlined and centralised process, that a Reference Panel be established to oversee the use and management of the City Hall including the booking process for events; - consider whether a revised charging policy should be developed for those City Hall functions where there is a commercial interest - with further information to be brought back to Committee on an appropriate scale of charges including a '<i>not for profit, not for loss</i>' scenario in line with best practice - consider whether tours should remain free of charge, in line with current practice, or if a charge should be levied; - agree that the criteria for the use of the City Hall grounds be reviewed and updated in line with the proposed review of the criteria for the use of the City Hall Building; - consider whether a charging policy should be introduced for the use of City Hall Grounds for events, possibly in line with the charges that are applied for events in the Council's parks and open spaces; - agree that all all future requests (to be completed via an enhanced application form) for use of the grounds of the City Hall must be submitted through the Director of Property & Projects who has delegated authority in this regard; and - agree that the Standing Orders are clarified to ensure that is explicit that the management of the City Hall Grounds is the responsibility of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee through the Director of Property & Projects
11.0	Appendix
	Appendix 1 – Initial consideration Paper