



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Use of the City Hall for Election Counts
Date:	18 th February, 2011
Reporting Officer:	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (ext 6314)
Contact Officer:	

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will recall that in November, 2009 they considered a request from the Electoral Office for the counts for the Westminster Elections to be held in the City Hall in 2010.
1.2	The Committee decided that it could not accede to this request. In coming to this decision, the Committee recognised that the emphasis placed on the usage of the City Hall had changed considerably and that the Council's efforts to make the building available to a wider range of groups had inevitably led to an increased usage. Given the uncertainty at that time as to when the election counts would be held, the Committee felt that it would not be possible to give a commitment to the Electoral Office to allow it to use the building when this might require a previously confirmed booking for another event to be cancelled. The Committee noted that, given that the Electoral Office would not know until a relatively late stage when Westminster elections would be held, it would be unlikely that the situation would change in the future.

2	Key Issues
2.1	Correspondence has again been received from the Electoral Office requesting that the Committee give consideration to including the City Hall in the list of venues which the Electoral Office will consider using for election counts. The letter recognises that any such request will be subject to availability and are merely seeking an agreement, in principle, for the City Hall to be considered as an appropriate count centre.

2.2	It should be noted that this request is different both in content and in tone to previous requests. It should be noted also that Members have previously expressed the view that, where possible, the City Hall should be able to be used for Westminster counts, subject to availability and to all logistical arrangements being confirmed to the satisfaction of the Council.
2.3	It is considered that this request from the Electoral Office is in keeping with the Committee's wish to see the building used for a wide range of events and, as such, it is recommended that the Committee accede to the request.
2.4	It should be noted that the first occasion when the Electoral Office will be likely to approach the Council for the use of the building will be for the count associated with the bye election for the Belfast West Parliamentary Constituency, whenever that is called.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	The Electoral Office would be required to cover any costs incurred by the Council with regard to its use of the building and to pay any hire charges which apply at the time of booking.

4	Equality and Good Relations Implications
4.1	None.

5	Recommendations
5.1	That the Committee accede to the request from the Electoral Office for the City Hall to be considered as an appropriate venue for election counts, subject to availability.

6	Decision Tracking
<p>Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (ext 6314)</p> <p>2nd March, 2011</p>	