



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Election Protocol
Date:	18 th February, 2011
Reporting Officer:	Ciaran Quigley, Assistant Chief Executive (ext 6038)
Contact Officer:	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (ext 6134)

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	In November, 2004 the Council adopted a protocol which set out how issues which might impact upon the election process should be dealt with in the run-up to Westminster, European, Assembly or Local elections.
1.2	This Election Protocol has served the Council well in the last 6 years and is issued to all Council Departments in advance of the 'purdah' period, that is, the period from the publication of the Notice of Election until the Count(s) are completed. This year, the purdah period will run from 25 th March until 10 th May inclusive.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The opportunity has been taken to update the Election Protocol prior to it being issued in advance of the Local and Assembly elections in May, 2011. In essence, the only material change proposed is to insert the following paragraph in Section 8 "Public Meetings"
2.2	<i>"However, the situation might arise whereby the Council has issued a policy document for consultation and the consultation period extends into the run up period to an election. If this consultation includes the holding of public meetings or meetings with particular interest groups, then the Council officers should firstly seek the authority of the appropriate Council Committee before proceeding and, if such authority is granted, ensure that all political groupings on the Council are afforded equality of opportunity to either attend or arrange such meetings."</i>

2.3	This paragraph deals with an issue which has arisen recently in relation to the consultation on the Pitches Strategy and it was considered best to include specific guidance as to how any future issues of a similar nature should be treated.
-----	---

3	Resource Implications
	None

4	Equality and Good Relations Implications
	None

5	Recommendations
5.1	The Committee is recommended to adopt the updated Election Protocol (copy attached at Appendix 1).

6	Decision Tracking
<p data-bbox="225 1294 884 1328">Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager</p> <p data-bbox="225 1361 448 1395">2nd March, 2011</p>	

7	Documents Attached
<p data-bbox="225 1637 644 1671">Appendix 1 – Election Protocol</p>	