



Belfast City Council

Report to	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Applications for the Use of the City Hall for Events Associated with the Decade of Centenaries
Date:	18th May, 2012
Reporting Officer:	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (ext 6314)
Contact Officer:	Caroline Wilson, Project Officer (ext 3399)

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The Committee, at its meeting on 20th January, 2012, agreed that any applications for the use of the City Hall by outside organisations in relation to events connected with the Decade of Centenaries should be dealt with in the normal way by the submission of an application form.
1.2	The organisation applying for the use would be required to demonstrate how the event would contribute substantially to the achievement of one or more of the Council's key themes as outlined in its Corporate Plan. In addition, given that the event was connected to the Decade of Centenaries, the organisers would be required to also demonstrate on the application form how the event met the principles which had been agreed by the Historic Centenaries Working Group in relation to all centenary events.
1.3	Since that time, four applications for the use of the City Hall for such events have been received. Three of these, from the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, from Co-Operation Ireland and from the Ulster Centenary Committee, have been approved by the Council. However, the other application, from the 36th (Ulster) Division Memorial Association, was referred to the Joint Group of the Party Leaders' Forum and the Historic Centenaries Working Group for further consideration in order to assess if the application was entirely consistent with the principles established by that Working Group.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The Joint Group of the Party Leaders' Forum and the Historic Centenaries Working Group met to discuss this application on 10th May.
2.2	There was a constructive debate at the Working Group on the specific application from the 36th (Ulster) Division. There was also considerable discussion about developing some general diversity guidelines to ensure an improved and consistent approach to such applications for the use of the City Hall by outside organisations in the future.
2.3	The Working Group agreed that the principles which had been established by the Historic Centenaries Working Group had been intended primarily to be applied to centenary events which were being organised directly by the Council. It was acknowledged that to strictly apply these principles to events which were being organised by outside organisations might not also be appropriate. It was considered that an alternative set of principles for such events should be prepared for discussion by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to determine whether they might be more appropriate.
2.4	The Working Group agreed that these principles should seek to ensure that any events to be held in the City Hall but organised by another agency should, in so far as was practicable, be inclusive, include different perspectives and be historically accurate. It was agreed also that, in the spirit of supporting diversity, the principles should allow for the holding of events which could be perceived as being single identity so long as they were not triumphalist in nature and did not seek to exclude sections of the community.
2.5	A draft statement on diversity and a set of draft principles is attached at Appendix 1 for the Committee's consideration.
2.6	In relation to the specific application which had been referred to the Working Group for consideration, it was noted that a meeting between the organisers and representatives of the Sinn Fein Party on the Council would be held during the week commencing 14th May and that the organisers would be willing to meet any other political party to discuss the application. It was acknowledged that any such meetings would require to be held prior to the date of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 18th May. Accordingly, it was agreed that the application from the 36th (Ulster) Division would be considered again by the Committee at that meeting and a copy of the original report is attached at Appendix 2.

2.7	<p>The Working Group discussed how applications for the use of the City Hall by outside organisations for Decade of Centenary events might be dealt with more consistently in future. It was agreed that when such an application is received it would first be assessed by the officers to ensure that the event met the conditions for the use of the City Hall and also the principles established by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for such centenary events. Officers would liaise with the organisation to clarify any issues and to suggest any necessary amendments to the proposed event to bring it in line with the principles. Once the final application was with the officers, they would prepare a report and, where time permitted, circulate it for information to the Joint Group of the Party Leaders' Forum and the Historic Centenaries Working Group. If there were any major concerns in relation to a particular application, then it was agreed that the Working Group could meet to discuss it in the first instance before it was submitted formally to the Committee for decision.</p>
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3	Resource Implications
3.1	None.

4	Equality and Good Relations Implications
4.1	None. The conditions for the use of the City Hall by outside organisations will be applied consistently.

5	Recommendations
5.1	<p>The Committee is recommended to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consider the statement on diversity and the set of principles to be applied to applications from outside organisations for the use of the City Hall for events associated with the Decade of Centenaries and consider whether they wish to adopt or amend the principles. 2. Approve the use of the City Hall for the 36th (Ulster) Division Memorial Association for an event to mark the formation of the Young Citizen Volunteers of Ireland. 3. Agree that any future applications for the use of the City Hall by outside organisations for events associated with the Decade of Centenaries will, where time permits, be first circulated for information to the Joint Group of the Party Leaders' Forum and the Historic Centenaries Working Group with the decision on the matter being taken by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

6	Decision Tracking
Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager	
June, 2012	

7	Documents Attached
Appendix 1 – Draft principles for the use of the City Hall by outside organisations for events associated with the Decade of Centenaries.	
Appendix 2 – Report to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 25th April, 2012 in relation to a request to use the City Hall to mark the formation of the Young Citizen Volunteers of Ireland.	