



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Request to use the City Hall to mark the formation of the Young Citizen Volunteers of Ireland
Date:	Wednesday, 25 April, 2012
Reporting Officer:	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (ext 6314)
Contact Officer:	Gareth Quinn, Senior Democratic Services Officer (ext. 6316)

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The Joint Group of the Party Leaders' Forum and Historic Centenaries Working Group, at its meeting on 13 January, agreed that any applications for the use of the City Hall should be dealt with in the normal way and be subject to the existing Council policy on the use of the building and also the principles already agreed by the Historic Centenaries Working Group which are attached as Appendix 1.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The 36 th (Ulster) Division Memorial Association have submitted an application form requesting the use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits to hold an event entitled 'Celebrating the formation of the Young Citizen Volunteers of Ireland (YCV)' on 10 September, 2012.
2.2	<p>The purpose of this event is to increase the understanding of the formation of the YCV and its role up to and including the end of the Great War. The organisers wish for the event to take place in the City Hall which is where the YCV was formed by the then Lord Mayor.</p> <p>It is proposed that the event will take the following format:</p> <p>7.00pm - Lecture by Dr Gordon Lucy</p> <p>7.45pm - Launch of a booklet which will chart the formation of the organisation and their role in the Great War of 1914 - 1918</p> <p>8.15pm – Refreshments, musical entertainment and opportunity for guests to view exhibition of YCV artefacts</p> <p>10.00pm – Event concludes</p>

2.3	The event aims to provide opportunities to include a range of different perspectives and ideologies, rather than a single viewpoint, aiming to increase understanding and appreciation of other perspectives and identities. The main event of the evening will be a lecture by Dr Gordon Lucy which will set the scene as to why the Young Citizen Volunteers of Ireland were formed and the role they played in Ireland at that time. This lecture will seek to provide an appreciation of the breadth and significance of the Division's formation and the event will be contextualised further through an exhibition of memorabilia which belonged to the YCV.
2.4	The organisers have confirmed that the event will be based on historic accuracy, robust academic expertise and critical analysis. It will do this by gaining input from historians and academics, such as Gordon Lucy the author and compiler of the book entitled "The Ulster Covenant: a Pictorial History". His advice is deemed critical in ensuring the event is accurately portrayed and that the historical context is captured.
2.5	The organisers are seeking to ensure that the event is non-exclusive and welcoming to all sections of the community in Belfast by inviting the Lord Mayor, all members of Belfast City Council's Good Relations Partnership along with representatives from a number of external organisations.
2.6	Based on the information received, the application appears to satisfy both the criteria on the use of the City Hall and the principles agreed by the Joint Group of the Party Leaders' Forum and Historic Centenaries Working Group on 13 January.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	The provision of tea/coffee and biscuits for 200 guests will cost approximately £500

4	Equality Implications
4.1	<p>The Council has agreed that the Decade of Centenaries provides an opportunity for groups and individuals to obtain a better understanding of the past and to promote respect for the complexity of our shared history.</p> <p>If this event is undertaken as described by the organisers and outlined above, in a non-exclusive and welcoming manner, it would have positive implications in terms of the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations.</p>

5	Recommendations
5.1	The Committee is recommended to grant the use of the City Hall and the provision of hospitality in the form of tea/coffee and biscuits for the event as detailed above.

6	Decision Tracking
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Principles to be used in selection of events to be marked in

Decade of Centenaries 2012-2022

(Approved by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee 21 October, 2011 – adopted by Council on 1 November, 2011)

The decade in question marks a number of particularly significant dates that have shaped the history of Northern Ireland and Ireland and therefore our own identities and cultures – see list previously circulated.

The marking of these events provides the Council with an excellent opportunity to broaden our understanding of the past and our respect for the complexity of our shared history.

As a shared city in the twenty-first century, we should be able to deal with difference in a positive and constructive manner, demonstrating openness on the basis of shared civic values within a democracy and a mature respect for cultural diversity within our heritage.

These principles are suggested in draft only, for initial discussion, based on reports previously submitted and comments made by the Working Group.

- Events supported by the Council should provide opportunities to include a range of different perspectives and ideologies, rather than a single viewpoint, aiming to increase understanding and appreciation of other perspectives and identities
- They should be based on historic accuracy and robust academic expertise – engagement with universities, museums, libraries, PRONI etc is essential to ensure this evidence base
- The interpretation of events should be in a broad historical context and understanding of the national and European setting of the time
- The Council should develop strong links with other institutions – i.e. museums, libraries, PRONI and other relevant organisations, to ensure that there is no duplication and that events and programmes are complementary
- We will provide/support a range of different types of events – from lectures, discussions, debates to films, drama, activities that attract schools and children/families etc – so that events can not only be educational but participative, creative and enjoyable
- We will provide/support events and activities that are not exclusive¹ but are ~~welcoming to all sections~~ of our increasingly diverse community in Belfast

¹ The Council, committed both to the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations in the City, will not support events or activities that could be deemed to be triumphalist, to deepen or harden existing divisions, or belittle or demonise other groups.
(Adapted from the Irish School of Ecumenics, *Moving Beyond Sectarianism* research)

This set of principles, if agreed, should be applied corporately to any key anniversaries being marked by the Council.