



BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Review of Civic HQ Unit
Date:	22 November 2013
Reporting Officer:	Gerry Millar, Director of Property & Projects, Ext: 6217
Contact Officer:	George Wright – Head of Facilities Management, Ext: 5206

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that the Civic HQ Unit manages the reception and telephonist staff in a number of council properties, and also manages the City Hall public and private tour service, liaises with function organisers in relation to civic and non-civic functions in the City Hall and provides a 'client' role for most city-centre council properties.
1.2	Members will also be aware that the Property & Projects Department is in the process of carrying out service reviews on most aspects of its current operations, with a view to improving services and identifying efficiencies where possible. Reviews of the Procurement, Security, Project Management, Fleet Management, Business Support and Property Maintenance units have already been carried out in this regard.
1.3	<p>The Civic HQ unit has not been reviewed from a structural or functional perspective in the last ten years, and it is the department's belief that the current structure, functional arrangements and existing job descriptions have become outdated and unfit for purpose. This has become more evident since the re-opening of the City Hall in 2009 and the changes in its business environment, most notably:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a sustained 40% increase in tours & tourists; • a sustained 22% increase in civic and non-civic functions; • the requirement to provide reception cover in additional buildings such as Adelaide exchange; • an enhanced 'client' role in terms of the upkeep, maintenance and servicing of the council's principal civic buildings; • new 'client' responsibilities for the Duncrue and ISB/Seymour House sites from 2013/14 onwards; • new responsibilities in terms of managing access-control systems and a potential increase in the incidence of such systems; • increasing use of the East exhibition space and the City Hall grounds; • increased workload in tours, access control and aspects of functions work are being covered via agency and or overtime arrangements; • potential additional responsibilities for new city-centre council accommodation and enhanced memorabilia and tour offerings; <i>and</i> • the transfer of telephony responsibilities to Digital Services.

1.4	Consequently, permission for a structural review was sought and granted by CMT in June 2012. The review was carried out in-house with Corporate HR support , and the review's findings and recommendations were endorsed by CMT in November 2013. However the review's recommendations require the approval of the Committee under the current Scheme of Delegation.
1.5	The structure proposed (see Appendix 1) recognizes the changes in the unit's business environment in terms of increases in tours and tourists, increases in the scale and scope of function-management activity and liaison needed and the increasing requirements in terms of the use of access-control systems etc.
1.6	The structure consists of 2 main strands, with the public-facing tours and functions work comprising one strand and the largely internal civic services (reception, telephony, access-control, handyperson etc) comprising the other, with both strands co-operating to deliver the 'client' role at variety of sites (now incl. both ISB & Duncrue).
1.7	The review also recognizes that the job descriptions, duties and rostering arrangements in relation specifically to Reception staff require updating, and also that these need to be flexible enough to cope with future changes eg City Hall Memorabilia Project.
1.8	Overall, the review recommends a nett increase of 2 FTE posts. In order to achieve this some posts have been deleted, some new posts created and other posts will have the council's categorisation or re-designation processes applied. Should any redundancy situations arise during this phase these would be dealt with solely on a voluntary basis, and some staff have already indicated a willingness to avail of this opportunity should it arise.
1.9	Discussions have taken place with staff and staff representatives in relation to the review, and these will continue in respect of implementation should the Committee be minded to approve the recommendations herein.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The key issue is that the Civic HQ Unit is facing a sustained increase in the scale and scope of its work and is currently coping through the use of agency and overtime, plus an enhanced reliance on casual staff.
2.2	The proposed new structure would align the unit's resources with the increased demands being made upon it, and would recognize the changes in business environment which have occurred and those which may potentially arise in the near future (notably council accommodation, enhanced memorabilia & tour offers etc).
2.3	Overall, the review would result in a modest nett increase in the number of front-line posts and there would obviously be some additional costs (see below), but these must be viewed in the context of the enhanced service. These new posts would also assist the council in terms of its ongoing employability obligations under the Investment Programme.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	The overall financial implications of this review are anticipated to be as follows:-

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the overall additional cost of the review would be £33,382 per annum (£41,480 incl. on-costs); to be derived from departmental efficiency savings; there would potentially be additional one-off costs in terms of voluntary redundancy payments and actuarial payments in respect of pension release, although it is not possible to quantify these at time of writing.
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4	Equality and Good Relations Implications
4.1	There are no direct equality or good relations implications arising from this report.

5	Recommendations
5.1	It is recommended that the Committee approves the establishment of the 2 new posts set out above, and also the revised reporting lines as set out in Appendix 1.

7	Key to Abbreviations
	None.

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Property & Projects – Facilities Unit

Status: Proposed Option
 Approval:
 Date:
 Confirmed:
 Updated:

