



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to</b>	<b>Strategic Policy and Resources Committee</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Initial Arrangements for the Local Elections</b>
<b>Date:</b>	24th January, 2014
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	Members will be aware that the Local Elections to the Shadow Belfast District Council will be held on 22nd May, 2014. The poll will be a joint one with the European Parliamentary Election.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	The final timetable for the Elections has not yet been issued by the Chief Electoral Officer and I will report back to Committee when this is received. However, there are some early decisions which the Council is required to take to allow officers to make early preparations.
2.2	<u>Count Venue</u> It is expected that the counts for the 10 District Electoral Areas (DEAs) in the new Belfast District will take place on Friday 23rd and Saturday 24th May. The suggestion is that 5 counts will take place on each day and it is recommended that the Committee agree that the venue for all of the counts will be the City Hall. This would require 3 counts to take place in the Great Hall and 1 each in the Banqueting Hall and the Reception Room.
2.3	<u>Order of Counts</u> It is recognised that most Members would prefer the count for the DEA in which they are standing to take place on the Friday rather than the Saturday. In deciding which 5 DEAs should be counted on the Friday, there are some logistical matters which need to be taken into account:

2.3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Reception Room is being used as a count venue and it is significantly smaller than the other count venues in the City Hall. The Banqueting Hall is the largest of the venues being used.</li> </ul>
2.3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The 10 DEAs do not all elect the same number of councillors. Black Mountain and Ormiston DEAs elect 7 members each; Balmoral and Botanic DEAs elect 5 members each; and Castle, Oldpark, Court, Collin, Lisnasharragh and Titanic DEAs each elect 6 members.</li> </ul>
2.4	It is accepted that the number of members to be elected to a DEA does not necessarily mean that the count will take less time to complete but that is the only variable which can reasonably be used to assess which counts should be held in which venue. Accordingly it is suggested that the following breakdown is agreed:
2.5	Reception Room – Balmoral and Botanic DEAs (5 members each) Banqueting Hall – Black Mountain and Ormiston DEAs (7 members each) Great Hall (1) – Castle and Oldpark DEAs (6 members each) Great Hall (2) – Court and Colin DEAs (6 members each) Great Hall (3) – Lisnasharragh and Titanic DEAs (6 members each)
2.6	If this is agreed, the Committee is requested to decide which of the 2 counts in each venue should be held on the Friday and which on the Saturday. It should be noted that the Friday morning will be spent undertaking a joint verification for both the European and Local Elections with the counts being held that day not likely to commence until after lunchtime, whereas the counts on the Saturday will commence at 9.00am. Therefore, although being held a day earlier, it is likely that the counts being held on the Friday will run for several hours later than those being held on the Saturday.

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	The local elections will be financed from the existing elections revenue budget.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Implications</b>
4.1	There are not any equality or good relations implications associated with this report.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	The Committee is requested to note the information provided and to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Agree that the count venue will be the City Hall.</li> <li>2. Agree to the venue allocation as set out in paragraph 2.5.</li> <li>3. Decide which 5 of the counts should be held on the Friday and which 5 on the Saturday.</li> </ol>

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager February 2014	

<b>7</b>	<b>Abbreviations</b>
DEA – District Electoral Area	