

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 6th January, 2017

SPECIAL MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Hussey (Chairperson);
Aldermen Convery and Rodgers; and
Councillors Attwood, Corr, Craig, Graham, Haire,
Hargey, Hutchinson, Jones, Long, McAllister, McCabe,
O'Donnell, Reynolds and Walsh.

Also Attended: Councillors Collins, Heading and Milne.

In attendance: Mrs. S. Wylie, Chief Executive;
Mr .G. Miller, Director of Property and Projects;
Mr. R. Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources;
Mr. J. Walsh, City Solicitor;
Mr. S. McCrory, Democratic Services Manager; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor Clarke.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Restricted Items

The Information contained in the following report is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014

Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2017/18

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the development of the revenue estimates for 2017/18 and the key issues which Members needed to consider as part of the rates settlement process. The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 16th December, it had agreed, amongst other things, that those areas for potential savings which had been identified by the Political Parties be considered in the first instance by the Budget and Transformation Panel.

The report outlined a number of further efficiency savings which the Panel, at its meeting on 20th December, had agreed should be presented to the Committee for consideration, together with a number of outstanding issues, namely, the Belfast Agenda, Community Grants and the future Efficiency Programme and targets.

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After a lengthy discussion, the Committee made the following decisions:

**Membership of the Northern Ireland
Local Government Association (NILGA)**

The Committee agreed to consider further the Council's membership of NILGA and the associated subscription at its meeting on 20th January.

Elected Members' Personal Development Plans (PDPs)

The Committee agreed to consider further the budget for the Elected Members' PDPs at its meeting on 20th January.

Rate Impact of Change to 3G Pitch Charges

The Committee agreed to consider, at its meeting on 20th January, the rating implication of the decision of the People and Communities Committee to reduce the price of 3G pitch hire by 25%.

**Revision to the Management of the City Hall
Function Booking Processes**

The Committee:

- a) Approved the revised criteria for the booking of rooms in the City Hall as set out below;
- b) Approved the Protocol for the use of the Conor and Lavery Rooms as set out below;
- c) Approved the room hire charges for the use of the City Hall as follows:

- £825 for a full evening function in the Great Hall
- £300 for an evening function in the various function rooms
- £115 for a daytime function in the various function rooms
- agreed that Community and Voluntary Groups be excluded from the hire charge rate

(with £13,850 of additional income to be included in the revenue estimates)

- d) agreed to cease the provision of hospitality for City Hall events, with the exception of Civic Events;

(with £28,800 of additional income to be included in the revenue estimates)

- e) agreed to impose a "one-in-three-year" rule in respect of commercial events, which are defined as *'for profit' and those events which, if not accommodated in the City Hall, would need to avail of private sector facilities and pay a full commercial rate;* and

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- f) delegated authority to the Director of Property and Projects to approve or reject requests for the use of a function room in the City Hall in circumstances where there was insufficient time to present the matter to the Committee or where the request was of a minor nature and was non-contentious, on the basis that any authority exercised be reported back to the Committee.

**Proposed revised criteria for booking the
function rooms in the City Hall**

Functions which WILL normally be permitted:

- a) *functions which are ancillary to other events being held in the city and which are of demonstrable economic benefit to Belfast whether organised by the council or not (e.g. conferences attracting large numbers of delegates requiring overnight accommodation, transport, food and beverages etc);*
- b) *Events which demonstrably enhance the city's image nationally or internationally as a desirable commercial, business or tourist destination;*
- c) *Events designed to celebrate or commemorate a notable achievement or significant anniversary (e.g. 25, 50, 100 years etc) by an organization or body with close links to the city or province;*
- d) *Events organised by recognised local community or voluntary sector groups for non-profit and non-political purposes;*
- e) *Events organized through any of the civic dignitaries during their period of office (administered by Lord Mayor's office) – where these involve charities fund-raising will be permitted;*

Functions which will NOT normally be permitted

- a) *Conferences, meetings, wedding receptions, private parties or receptions and similar booking requests in the prestige function rooms;*
- b) *Functions which have as their principal purpose the generation of commercial gain for the organizers (although charity fund-raising would be permitted for [f] above);*
- c) *Functions which have no compelling links to the council or the city specifically and which could instead avail of local private-sector facilities;*
- d) *Functions which have as their primary purpose the advancement of any political or religious cause or campaign or are otherwise potentially contentious and/or involve significant reputational risks for the council;*
- e) *Events which involve exceptionally large and/or disruptive set-ups or which pose a real and tangible risk to the fabric of the building and/or its grounds*

Use of the Conor and Lavery Committee Rooms

Primary Use

The main purpose of these rooms is to accommodate meetings of the Council's Standing Committees and All-Party Working Groups and to act as a venue for individual Members, in carrying out their representative roles as Councillors, to meet with constituents or groups of constituents.

Guiding Principals for Other Use

- 1. The rooms may be booked for meetings of bodies which involve a number of our Members directly and which are administered by the Council, such as the Policing and Community Safety Partnership.*
- 2. The rooms may be booked for meetings which involve the Chief Officers and/or Elected Members, such as CMT and the Budget and Transformation Panel.*
- 3. The rooms may be booked for meetings involving Chief Officers and/or Elected Members and/or Statutory Partner Agencies.*
- 4. It is accepted that there may be a lack of meeting space for those Council Services which have relocated to the City Hall. Therefore, the rooms may be booked for internal meetings by those Services based **wholly** in the City Hall where there is no other meeting room available.*

In any of the above circumstances, Services making bookings which meet the criteria need to understand that Democratic Services may at any time cancel the booking if a special meeting of one of the Standing Committees is called which requires the use of the room. Although we will do our best to prevent this happening, no guarantee can be given that a booking will be able to be honoured.

Coca-Cola Belfast Bike Scheme

The Committee approved the following revised Pricing Policy:

- The annual subscription fee to remain at £20 per annum
- To replace the current £5 Casual Three Day Pass with a £5 Casual One Day Pass and a £10 Casual Three Day Pass
- To restrict subscriber access to one bike
- The current first half hour free usage being reduced to 15 minutes (with £15,000 of additional income to be included in the revenue estimates)

The decision on the Bike Scheme free usage reduction was agreed following a vote by show hands, with fourteen Members voting for and three against.

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Community Grants

The Committee agreed that the additional funding required for the Community Development Grant Programme for the current financial year and the community grant budget for future years be considered again at the meeting to be held on 20th January.

Belfast Agenda

The Committee agreed that the proposed funding for the delivery of the Belfast Agenda outcomes in the three priority areas, that is, Belfast Works; Smart City and the Small Business Service; and Wider Skills Development Programme be considered further at its meeting on 20th January.

Efficiency Programme

The Committee adopted the recommendation of the Budget and Transformation Panel that "Council's Markets" should be added to the "Commercialisation/Income Maximisation" Work Stream and that the efficiency target for 2018/19 and 2019/20 should be increased from the current £2m to £2.5m in each of these years and that, in addition, a new target of increasing Council income by £500k be set for both financial years. The Committee noted that a more detailed report on the future of the efficiency programme would be brought to the Committee in February 2017.

Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 3rd January, had, in accordance with standing orders, referred the following notice of motion, which had been moved by Councillor Collins and seconded by Councillor Milne, to the Committee for consideration:

"The Council notes that funding of the Citywide Tribunal Service ends as of December 2016. It recognises the important role this service has played in helping people across this city and understands that faced with the coming changes surrounding Welfare Reform, this service is needed now more than ever. The Council recognises also the ongoing efforts to secure alternative sources of funding, but also stresses the absolute necessity to continue this service and, therefore, pledges to retain Belfast City Council funding for this project until other sources of funding are secured."

The Committee was advised that correspondence had been received from the Chairperson of the Belfast Advice Group, on behalf of the Service, formally requesting the Council to extend its funding for the Tribunal Service. This would require funding in the sum of £54,000 in the current financial year and £100,000 for 2017/18, during which time the Service would seek match funding from the Department of Communities and other sources.

During discussion, the Members expressed their support for the Citywide Tribunal Service and, in response to a question, the Director of Finance and Resources explained, if the Committee was so minded, how budgets could be reallocated to fund the £54,000 in

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the current year and how the Committee might wish to consider the request for funding for 2017/18 at a future meeting through a non-recurrent allocation and in the context of the Quarter 3 finance report. He explained also that Part 2.3.1 of the Council's Scheme of Delegation provided him with authority, under certain conditions, to approve the payment as a matter of urgency without the need for Council ratification.

The Committee agreed:

- To provide funding of £54,000 for the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service for the current financial year ending on 31st March, 2017;
- Noted that the Director of Finance and Resources was empowered to proceed with the payment pursuant to 2.3.1 of the Scheme of Delegation which permitted expenditure to be incurred in cases of urgency in so far as the requirement to advise the Chair was satisfied as he had obtained the consent of the Committee, with the Chair concurring in that decision;
- To indicate that it was minded to support funding of up to £100,000 to the Service for the financial year 2017/18 on the basis of a non-recurrent reallocation, subject to:
 - Affordability, which would be considered as part of the Quarter 3 finance report to be presented to the Committee in February; and
 - Council officers working with the Service to identify what the Service would achieve with that funding and what other sources of funding were being sought.

It was agreed also to write again to the Minister for Communities seeking a meeting with an all-party deputation from the Council to discuss funding for the Service.

Operational Issues

City Hall Passenger Lift

The Committee noted that work was due to commence on the City hall passenger lift and Members would be advised, in writing, in due course on the time schedule for the works.

Chairperson