



Subject:	City Hall Exhibition – operational arrangements
Date:	24 March 2017
Reporting Officer:	Gerry Millar, Director of Property & Projects
Contact Officer:	George Wright, Head of Facilities Management

Is this report restricted?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of report
1.1	To seek the Committee’s endorsement of the proposed operational arrangements for the new Exhibition Area opening in May 2017.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to; <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Note and endorse the operational mechanisms set out below;• Note and endorse the proposed changes to the Security Unit;• Endorse the approach to merchandising within the Exhibition area.
3.0	Background
3.1	The Committee will be aware that the council has agreed to develop and operate a high-quality permanent visitor attraction in the east side of the City Hall building. This facility is to be managed on a day-to-day basis by the Civic HQ Unit of the Facilities Management Section. The following provides a summary of the operational modalities of the Exhibition:

3.2 Staffing & opening hours

Following discussion at the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee, the planned opening hours of the facility are as set out below. As can be seen, the facility will be open seven days per week including late-night opening each Thursday.

FACILITY OPENING HOURS	
Monday	09.30 - 17.00
Tuesday	09.30 - 17.00
Wednesday	09.30 - 17.00
Thursday	09.30 - 20.00
Friday	09.30 - 17.00
Saturday	10.00 - 17.00
Sunday	10.00 - 17.00

3.3 As the Committee will be aware, a new Tours & Exhibitions reception is being constructed in the former PUP party room in G02; this will be the main entrance for all visitors (SP&R Committee has already agreed to close the East entrance at the same time as the exhibition is opened to the public).

3.4 This reception will be staffed by two full-time Leaders and supplemented by three part-time Reception Administrator (Tours & Exhibitions) staff plus a casual pool. These newly created posts are currently being recruited and appointments will be made by 31st March 2017. It is planned to have all new staff in place by **1st May 2017** to allow for a period of detailed familiarisation with the Exhibition and the associated various systems and services.

3.5 Charging and customer management

In line with the recommendations of the council's principal consultants, Redhead Ltd, and the decisions of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee, the basic orientation to charging is that for all 'walk-in' visitors entrance to the facility will be free. A charge will however be applied to 'commercial' groups¹ defined as being groups of visitors paying a premium to a third party as part of a wider managed itinerary (e.g. cruise-ship tour operators).

3.6 Entrance fees for these commercial groups will be on the following basis:-

Package	Price
City Hall - tour only	£2.00
Exhibition (incl. headset & souvenir guide)	£5.00
Exhibition (incl. headset & guide) & City Hall tour	£6.00

¹ As is currently the case for commercial tours of the building

3.7	<p>Costs relating to other aspects of the visitor experience will be as follows</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="252 271 1461 427"> <tr> <td data-bbox="252 271 644 322">Hire of headsets</td> <td data-bbox="644 271 1461 322">£3.50 per person (<i>non-refundable</i>)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="252 322 644 374">Purchase of souvenir guide</td> <td data-bbox="644 322 1461 374">£1.00</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="252 374 644 427">Downloadable app</td> <td data-bbox="644 374 1461 427">£1.50 (<i>will not be available initially but may be introduced later</i>)</td> </tr> </table>	Hire of headsets	£3.50 per person (<i>non-refundable</i>)	Purchase of souvenir guide	£1.00	Downloadable app	£1.50 (<i>will not be available initially but may be introduced later</i>)
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3.8	<p>In terms of payments, the new systems will accept credit-card, contactless card and cash payments, and in terms of billing it has been agreed that debtors' invoicing in arrears will be an option (not currently permitted for tour bookings). Online booking facilities are also being explored.</p>						
3.9	<p>A system of 15-minute booking slots will be in place; this is inevitable given the capacity of the first themed area of the tour is 35 people, so that we may at peak times have to 'drip-feed' visitors into the facility in discrete slots in order to comply with Building Control requirements. As outlined above, the East entrance will become an exit-only facility in order to assist with customer management and traffic flows.</p>						
3.10	<p>The large 'commercial' groups will be catered for in a separate waiting area immediately opposite the main Tours & Exhibitions Reception.</p>						
3.11	<p>It is now anticipated that the official opening of the new Exhibition facility will take place on Monday 15th May 2017, and the facility will be open to the public thereafter.</p>						
3.12	<p><u>Systems & services</u></p> <p>Multi-lingual interactive headsets delivering the agreed content in eight languages (including Irish & Ulster Scots) will be available for hire. While these are expensive devices to procure and programme, we will not take deposits for them because of the additional administrative and customer management problems this poses; instead we are using a series of radio-frequency 'anti-forget' sensors and alarms at all main exits to try to manage down the potential for loss.</p>						
3.13	<p>These headsets are kept in dedicated charging stations which are also linked to an information system which will provide timely and accurate information in relation both to stock of headsets on hand at any given time and also more detailed reports on usage (e.g. which languages are most selected, duration of use etc).</p> <p>A dedicated point-of-sale system has also been procured and is currently being configured ready for use with all cash receipts from all headset hire, souvenir guide sales and</p>						

3.14	<p>merchandising etc, together with a booking system to track numbers and pre-allocate 'commercial' groups etc.</p>
	<p><u>Merchandising</u></p> <p>Merchandising sales have the potential to generate significant income for the council, depending upon the location within the Exhibition, item pricing and the range of stocked items.</p>
3.15	<p>Dedicated merchandising advice was sought in terms of this aspect of the facility and proposals developed on foot of that advice.</p>
3.16	<p>The Committee will however be aware that the proposal to create a new, dedicated Tours & Exhibitions reception area on the main marble was turned down by the Committee and alternative plans have therefore been developed.</p>
3.17	<p>The intention is to reposition the existing main Reception counter somewhat, close to its existing location but with a dedicated merchandising area immediately behind it (see Appendix 1).</p>
3.18	<p>This represents the best available alternative, in that it maintains line-of-sight of the merchandising area for visitors and keeps the area broadly within the overall footprint of the facility, as recommended by our consultant.</p>
3.19	<p>An initial range of merchandising items has now been agreed and these items are being procured. In addition to the regular and some bespoke souvenir items we plan to stock some locally produced items, and are currently in discussion with colleagues in the Economic Development Unit about arranging a 'Made in Belfast' competition.</p>
3.20	<p>All the marketing and merchandising material will replicate the brand logo and text developed by Redhead, the USP of which is the City Hall building itself.</p>
3.21	<p><u>Bobbin area</u></p> <p>The Committee will be aware that the Bobbin facility will become part of the wider exhibition area, and has been closed for necessary renovations for some time. The Committee will also recall that SP&R committee has previously agreed that, in the period between the opening of the Exhibition and the letting of a new franchise contract for the Bobbin, the previous operator, LOAF, would be offered the use of the facility.</p>
	<p>LOAF has indicated it is keen to take up this opportunity as soon as possible and it is proposed</p>

3.22	to grant access to LOAF to the new facility on 10 th April 2017 for the purposes of setting up and preparing for opening.
3.23	<p>It is intended that the facility will be opened to the public on 19th April 2017, with access by the back door only. The Exhibition itself would remain closed off as at present until the official opening, and the Bobbin area would also be screened off at the entrance until the full opening. LOAF has yet to confirm these provisional dates.</p>
3.24	<p><u>Management & control</u></p> <p>The back-office elements of the Civic HQ structure are being revised currently in order to take into account the Exhibition responsibilities (and also the transfer of function bookings from Democratic Services). It is hoped that this exercise will be complete by the end of April 2017 and will provide additional management and supervisory support to the Tours & Exhibitions staff.</p>
3.25	<p>With regard to safety and customer management, the Unit has agreed an overall maximum visitor number of 350 for the area with Building Control, and has also tabled a comprehensive management plan for the facility. This includes health & safety issues, customer management and flow control, access/egress, escalation processes and facility management.</p>
3.26	<p>In addition to the five new Reception posts created as per the above, the Cleaning & Portering Unit has recruited two additional day-time part-time Cleaners specifically to clean the toilets, corridors and principal areas of the Exhibition facility.</p>
3.27	<p><u>Security reorganisation</u></p> <p>In relation to Security, we are currently reorganising the unit's shift rota to ensure that two Security Operatives are on duty at all times throughout the opening hours of the Exhibition. This will be essential to monitor visitor numbers, respond to and escalate any issues arising, deal with customer queries, and assist with headset management. The lower estimate of visitor numbers for the Exhibition is 100,000 p.a. so these staff will be essential.</p>
3.28	<p>In addition, elected members will be aware that the new council building at 9-21 Adelaide Street is now almost fully operational, and by July 2017 the two buildings at Cecil Ward and 9 Adelaide will together house nearly 1,200 staff. Clearly, adequate security cover at this building will be necessary, and for the reasons above the Unit has been considering how best to allocate its resources to provide the enhanced levels of service, without any greater financial burden on the rate-payer.</p>

3.29	<p>It is proposed therefore, that Security staff will be deployed, working to new shift arrangements, to ensure the necessary cover at the Exhibition Area and 9 Adelaide. This new proposed rota means that BCC security staff won't cover the council's Duncrue site (the council's current security contractors, Sword Security Ltd, will cover this site); ensures BCC security staff are deployed at the Council's new and high profile exhibition and buildings; allows cover for the Exhibition area at weekends to be provided in normal time rather than on double-time enhanced hours as at present; requires one additional week-end day to be covered but 27 fewer night shifts per person per annum; and means that staff who rely on public transport for work no longer have the difficulties associated with the poor service for this location in off-peak hours.</p>
3.30	<p>In addition, Control Room operatives will be required to operate additional, enhanced CCTV and access-control systems on foot of the Exhibition and changes to car-parking processes but the externalisation of fire and intruder alarm monitoring will ease the burden on these roles.</p>
3.31	<p>Further, the installation of a fully-automated access-control system at the Raphael St site will mean enhanced management and utilization of this important city-centre site and extend opening hours.</p>
3.32	<p>There will be no changes to existing terms and conditions of employment for these staff (including pay & grading) and there will be no change to the staffing numbers on the Council's organisational structure, but rather the shift rota for security cover has been proposed on the basis of a minimally reduced number of security staff as a result of natural turnover.</p>
3.33	<p>By making the changes outlined above, the Security Unit would be in a position to fulfil all its obligations including the new cover required in the Exhibition and the 9 Adelaide building from within its current budgetary allocation and without requiring any additional rate-borne resources.</p>
3.34	<p>Additional CCTV cameras will cover all areas and themed rooms of the Exhibition and will be recorded and monitored in the Control Room on a 24/7 basis. Some additional software may be needed in the Control Room in future to exploit the wider analytical capabilities of these cameras, but this would be the subject of a separate report once the Exhibition is operational.</p> <p><u>Impact on existing services</u></p>

3.35	<p>The Committee will be aware that the long-standing City Hall tours function will continue to operate after the Exhibition itself becomes operational. Visitor numbers for this service continue to be stable and robust, with almost 60,000 visitors per annum taking tours (public and private).</p>
3.36	<p>This service is a distinct offer in itself, and it has therefore been necessary to seek to ensure that the main Exhibition does not succeed at the expense of the tours service but rather that the two offers are managed and marketed as complementary to each other. As set out above, package prices are available for commercial groups, who can choose to take only the Exhibition or to take both Exhibition and public tour, at substantially discounted rates.</p>
3.37	<p>In addition, the infrastructure within the Exhibition and the content of the souvenir guide are being used to proactively market and promote the tour service, as will the free downloadable app. This app will be available on both iOS and Android platforms (but not Windows Phone) and will give the visitor useful and interesting information about the City Hall (including stained-glass windows, statuary & grounds.) and will also actively promote the tour service.</p>
3.38	<p><u>Signage</u></p> <p>All signage is currently being reviewed in liaison with Corporate Communications; this will provide a focus on the Exhibition, Tours & Bobbin but will also ensure proper sign-posting of the other public-facing services e.g. BDM & Civil Partnerships.</p>
3.39	<p><u>Marketing</u></p> <p>The Corporate Communications Section is currently developing both a planned programme of activity in relation to the Exhibition launch and also a media campaign in respect of the marketing of the facility both in the lead-up to launch but also thereafter on social media etc. A budget of £35,000 has been allocated for this work from the main Exhibition project fund.</p>
3.40	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>All the expenditure relating to the provision of staffing and operational systems and services has been provided for in the revenue estimates of the Civic HQ Unit for 2017/18 or, where appropriate, in the overall capital project budget (e.g. signage etc.).</p>
	<p><u>Equality & Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>The Exhibition has been designed to ensure DDA compliance in liaison with the Good</p>

3.41	Relations Unit, and there are no other direct good relations or equality issues arising in respect of this report.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Revised merchandising arrangements – Reception & marble area