



Subject:	Belfast Castle and Malone House Potential Re-opening date
Date:	12 August 2020
Reporting Officer:	Ryan Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Catherine Taggart, Neighbourhood Services Manager (East)

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To update Members of the planned re-opening timetable for Belfast Castle and Malone House, initially closed as a result of Covid 19 regulations, from 1st September 2020 on a phased basis.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to; <ul style="list-style-type: none">Note the content of the report and reopening plan for Belfast Castle and Malone House from 1st Sept 2020 on a phased basis subject to business demand.

3.0	Main report
	<p data-bbox="272 226 432 259"><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p data-bbox="165 300 1442 427">3.1 Belfast Castle and Malone House are currently closed. All staff are furloughed with the exception of the operations managers for each building who returned to working part time hours from July 6th in order to manager customer enquiries and bookings.</p> <p data-bbox="165 472 1458 831">3.2 Given the NI Executive decision to permit indoor weddings, subject to buildings being able to safely comply with the guidance on social distancing, a review of the diary for the two buildings showed four weddings for the month of September. Of those, one wedding with 140 quests exceeds the safe capacity and cannot be accommodated, a second has now cancelled. October wedding bookings are again small in number with five bookings across the two buildings. Officers are also reviewing the bookings associated with family/social circle gatherings (i.e. birthday parties, anniversaries etc.)</p> <p data-bbox="165 898 1358 981">3.3 All business bookings for small scale conferencing at both buildings have had to be cancelled due to the NI Executive restrictions on such events.</p> <p data-bbox="165 1048 1469 1435">3.4 In reviewing options for operational recovery of services within City and Neighbourhood Services, officers have considered a range of options for the reopening of Belfast Castle and Malone House presenting time-frames to the Corporate Recovery Governance Group on July 30th. Taking into account the number of staff currently on furlough, the small number of diary bookings which could be honoured either on grounds of capacity or as a result of the embargo on conference events, the impact of wedding cancellations on the customer and the resulting financial modelling, officers have concluded that the full reopening of the buildings at this time for normal business is not financially viable.</p> <p data-bbox="165 1480 1469 1742">3.5 In liaison with the catering provider, French Village, officers propose a phased reopening of both venues for pre-existing bookings for weddings and catering and to accommodate new permissible bookings focusing on Friday, Saturday and Sundays only during September and October 2020 and are currently working with the catering provider to put in place a new retail offering in the current context.</p> <p data-bbox="165 1787 1458 1989">3.6 To ensure the protection of both staff and customers, each venue will have significant Covid-19 Health and Safety measures in place. Officers are working to ensure that the new safety measures will put minds at ease for users but still allow everyone to experience a friendly, welcoming environment in each venue.</p>

3.7	There will be changes to the numbers of people that can be accommodated in each venue and staff will engage with customers over the coming weeks to support customer understanding of the impact of the Covid risk assessment on their event planning. Health and safety measures will be implemented, essential signage assembled, one way systems established where necessary, hand sanitising stations, deep cleaning and other necessary arrangements.
3.8	Officers will continually keep this under review as circumstances of furlough and NI Executive restrictions on events and gatherings change.
3.9	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The costs associated with the facilities re-opening have been considered and included as part of the overall projected corporate deficit and whilst a full financial report is due to be tabled at SP&R Committee in August, it is anticipated that the reopening will increase the overall deficit by £100k approximately depending on the uptake of new bookings and the success of the retail offering.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None.