

Project Title: Malone House
Net cost to the Council: circa £147k
Primary objective: Maximise an existing Council asset and reduce annual operating costs
<p>Secondary objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the character of the estate as an open public space and as a recreational/tourism product. • Bring an imaginative new feel to Malone House. • Offer value for money and a quality product.
<p>Brief description:</p> <p>Barnett Demesne, once a private estate, opened to the public in 1951. As of 2020, the demesne, which is located at the Malone Road/Shaw’s Bridge intersection in south Belfast, retains much of the character of the original estate. There are a number of lease/licence arrangements within the grounds of Barnett Demesne that are managed by Belfast City Council.</p> <p>The grounds of Barnett Demesne include, amongst other things, Malone House, which is a two-storey late Georgian mansion. Since June 1983, Malone House has become a venue for weddings, conferences, social functions, private dining and other events (e.g. exhibitions), while the surrounding grounds are popular with walkers and cyclists.</p> <p>Within Malone House, there are two dining areas (Malone Room and Barnett Restaurant), four function rooms and two bridal rooms. The catering operations at Malone House (which covers events, ceremonies and retail services in both the dining areas and function rooms) are provided by an external catering company (French Village Catering Ltd.). It operates under an agreed contract with the Council. Analysis of data for the period 26/3/18 - 31/3/19 indicates that the <u>occupancy or utilisation of the four main function rooms was between 19% and 35%.</u></p> <p>There is an opportunity to seek submissions, in the form of a publicly advertised ‘Request for Information’ (RFI), from suitably experienced and dynamic individual(s)/business(es) to take forward interesting and innovative proposals relating to operating Malone House (in a way that fits well with the character of the estate as an open public space and does not detract from the recreational/tourism use of the wider site). Indeed, the Council has received some informal proposals from interested parties, including non-profit organisations relating to Malone House.</p>

Project Title: Bulky Waste Collection Service

Net cost to the Council: circa £974k

Primary objective: Reduce annual operating costs

Secondary objectives:

- Support behavioural change amongst local communities e.g. supporting reductions in waste, incentivising reuse or recycling etc.
- Enhance customer experience e.g. by developing online functionality and capability.

Brief description:

The existing Bulky Waste Collection Service, covering the entire Council area, includes the collection of prearranged bulky waste goods (including white goods), along with fly tipped waste and alley clearances. In 2018, 38,340 service requests for prearranged bulky waste collections were completed. However, a significant proportion of these collections are not completed (for a variety of reasons, including waste not being presented for collection).

In addition, there has been a substantial increase in 'uncontrollable' costs, such as fuel, waste disposal (gate fees and landfill tax) and employee costs, in recent years.

Initial benchmarking analysis indicates that other Councils in Northern Ireland provide similar services, but, unlike Belfast City Council, each have associated pricing structures in place.

There is an opportunity to explore potential pricing options for the bulky waste service in order to, amongst other things, reduce annual operating costs.

Project Title: Pest Control

Net cost to the Council: circa £285k

Primary objective: Reduce annual operating costs

Secondary objectives:

- Enhance customer experience e.g. by developing online functionality and capability.
- Determine appropriate delivery model for in-house pest control (which is currently outsourced).
- Support behavioural change amongst local communities.

Brief description:

The existing Pest Control service, covering the entire Council area, offers visits to domestic households (free of charge) for the treatment of pests such as rats, mice, bedbugs, fleas and flies. In 2017, circa 5,000 domestic visits were completed.

However, a key issue for the service is that there is a significant proportion of no admissions for prearranged appointments. Consequently, there is a cost to the Council in terms of staff time, as the prearrange slot is lost productivity that could have been used for another visit.

Also, Belfast City Council is the only council in Northern Ireland that offers a free domestic pest control service.

Whilst Lisburn and Castlereagh Borough Council currently charges for a similar service, initial benchmarking indicates that no other Council in Northern Ireland offers this service. Instead, domestic residents are advised to engage with private sector providers.

There is an opportunity to explore potential future options for the pest control service in order to, amongst other things, reduce annual operating costs. In addition, the Council currently uses external contractors (rather than in-house resources) to undertake pest control in its buildings. There is also an opportunity for the most appropriate delivery model and possible associated fees/charges to be examined as part any future service provision.

Project Title: Council-wide events Policy

Net cost to the Council: circa £1.4m

Primary objective: Reduce annual operating costs

Secondary objectives:

- Align with best practice in terms of levying charges for commercial related events.
- Support the Council as it proactively seeks to host and/or facilitate future commercial-related events in the City.
- Create consistency in approaches to pricing across teams/department within the Council.

Brief description:

The Council is involved in a range of commercial related events, including those that are held in its parks and leisure facilities (e.g. Belsonic and Tenants Vital festivals) and those that have a tourism and cultural focus e.g. annual Maritime festival etc.

There is an opportunity to develop a Council-wide events policy & procedures to include establishing transparent, fair and consistent pricing options. It is anticipated that this will (amongst other things):

- Support the Council as it proactively seeks to host and/or facilitate future commercial related events in the City.
- Create consistency in approaches to pricing across teams/department within the Council.

Preliminary research suggests that other Councils in Great Britain have events polices in place, which includes clear details of the various fees and charges that are levied for commercial related events.