



Subject:	Request to present: AIPC - the International Association of Convention Centres
Date:	10 November 2025
Reporting Officer:	Keith Forster, Senior Responsible Officer Rob McConnell, Chief Executive, ICC Belfast Waterfront Hall Ulster Hall Iain Bell, Director of Finance, Risk and Corporate Services, ICC Belfast Waterfront Hall Ulster Hall
Contact Officer:	Iain Bell, Director of Finance, Risk and Corporate Services – Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes ☐ No ☒
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number	
1. Information relating to any individual 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	☐
After Council Decision	☐
Sometime in the future	☐
Never	☐

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes ☒ No ☐

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to inform members about AIPC - the International Association of Convention Centres – and request that they present a summary of the convention centre industry to add an independent view on ICC Belfast.
1.2	This presentation, or written submission, would provide context to discussions around the extension of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Limited contract.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	Members are requested to: - Approve the presentation request for AIPC Chief Executive, Sven Bossu to present at the next BWUH Ltd Shareholders' Committee.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND HIGHLIGHTS
3.1.1.	AIPC is the global industry association for professional convention and exhibition centre managers. It runs continuing research, benchmarking and education programmes, and convenes industry leaders; activity that produces proprietary operational and financial data, and sector expertise.
3.1.2	Due to its membership base, benchmarking programme (developed with independent consultants), annual conferences and quality standards, AIPC is well positioned to give an independent view on industry trends and context to the International Convention Centre Belfast – ICC Belfast.
3.1.3	AIPC data and benchmarking was used in the original proposal for not only building an international convention centre in Belfast, but the rationale behind using a public-private ownership model via Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.
3.2	Section 1: About AIPC
3.2.1	AIPC is the industry association for professional convention and exhibition centre managers worldwide. It represents a global network of leading centres and senior centre managers, e.g. Chief Executive and Executive Leaders.

3.2.2	AIPC is one of the industries main qualified associations based on benchmarking & data, research & publications, education, quality standards & peer learning, and events and networking.
3.2.3	Benchmarking & data — AIPC runs an operational and financial benchmarking programme (in collaboration with specialist consultants such as HLT Advisory) that gathers 30+ metrics across operations and finances and produces custom reports for participating centres. This produces directly comparable, centre-level performance data.
3.2.4	Research & publications — the association publishes sector research and periodic reports (for example annual benchmarking reports and related industry studies) drawing on member data and third-party analysis. This includes internal member input but also an external economic view of the conference and events industry, tied to economic forecasting.
3.2.5	Education, quality standards and peer learning — AIPC runs training, quality-standards programmes and produces guidance to encourage excellence in centre management. BWUH Ltd recently acquired the AIPC Gold Accreditation, in which the company was independently audited on finance, health and safety, performance, quality and customer experience.
3.2.6	Events & networking — annual conferences and meetings allow senior centre managers to present case studies, share governance and commercial models, and review sector trends in person.
3.3	Section 2: Rationale
3.3.1	AIPC's stated mission emphasises encouraging and recognising excellence in convention-centre management and providing tools to achieve high standards rather than promoting a single ownership model. That mission orientation supports objective, performance-based recommendations.
3.3.2	AIPC members include centres operating under the same governance models as BWUH Ltd, and the associations broad exposure supports a more balanced, comparative analysis than a single-market study. AIPC also presents results at its annual conference and in published reports, where findings are discussed and scrutinised by peers which adds a practical layer of quality control.
3.3.3	AIPC's recent reports and the 2024 benchmarking publication document trends such as the return to in-person events with hybrid elements, the degree of outsourcing for event

	operations (the 2024 benchmarking report notes outsourcing levels), and workforce/hybrid workplace shifts, all directly relevant to BWUH Ltd strategy and capacity planning.
3.3.4	The benchmarking program collects detailed operational KPIs and financial metrics (turnover, revenue per sqm, staffing ratios, direct costs) that allow centres to identify efficiency gaps and revenue opportunities. Because AIPC provides each participant a custom benchmarking report, Boards and management can see where their venue sits relative to peers and make informed financial decisions.
3.3.5	AIPC's membership includes public-private venues and privately managed centres. Their benchmarking and case studies enable comparisons of cost structures, subsidy levels, and commercial outcomes across models, which helps answer whether a city should outsource operations, or use hybrid governance. AIPC benchmarking and data informed the original case study for Belfast's convention centre requirements and proposed ownership and Governance models.
3.4	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> N/A
3.5	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u> There are no equality or good relations implications in this report. The company has complied with all relevant legislation and has not received any complaints in this area.
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	N/A