



Subject:	Revisions to Management of City Hall Function Booking Processes and other City Hall Matters
Date:	23 September 2016
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 present to Committee proposed revisions to the City Hall Function Booking Process and updated operational arrangements in relation to the East Entrance Exhibition space.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>It is recommended that the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agrees to adopt the revised criteria governing access to the council’s prestige function rooms as set out above;• Establishes a position on the availability of civic hospitality (incl. free drinks receptions) on the basis of the options set out in 3.5 below.• Agrees to permit the imposition of a once-in-three-years rule in respect of function booking requests where appropriate on the basis of the criteria set out above.• Agrees to delegate authority to the Director of Property & Projects on the basis of 3.7 below.• Agrees to receive details on all booking requests in respect of the 3 prestige function rooms in a revised monthly report format.• Agrees to make the East Entrance an exit only door.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides direction on addressing the Bobbin issue.
3.0	Key Issues
3.1	Members will be aware that, in June 2016, the Committee agreed to revise the arrangements for the management of requests for use of the City Hall's three prestige function rooms, and also to develop revised criteria for access. It was also agreed that, at a time to be specified, the responsibility for vetting and presenting requests for use of the function rooms would pass from the Democratic Services Section to the Civic HQ Unit of the Facilities Management Section.
3.2	<p>This was to be preceded by the development of a proposed new set of criteria governing access to the function rooms for the Committee's approval, and the proposed revised criteria are set out below for the Committee's consideration. In developing these criteria consideration has been given to the fact that the City Hall is a hugely prestigious location which is normally provided free of charge and that it is being claimed by local business units that its use is depressing the demand for commercially-available facilities in the wider economy.</p> <p>The revised criteria are proposed to be as follows:-</p>
3.3	<p><u>Functions which WILL normally be permitted:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Functions which are ancillary to other events being held in the city and which are of demonstrable benefit to Belfast whether organized by the council or not (e.g. conferences attracting large numbers of delegates requiring overnight accommodation, transport, food & 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 by an organization or body with close links to the city or province; d) Events organized by recognized local community or voluntary sector groups for non-profit 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; f) Functions with compelling links to Council business

3.4	<p><u>Functions which will NOT normally be permitted</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Conferences, meetings, wedding receptions, private parties 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.
3.5	<p>In addition to free use of the prestige rooms, many function organisers also benefit from the availability of civic hospitality (often including a drinks reception of up to £500 in value). It is suggested that the Committee take this opportunity to consider whether (a) to remove this facility entirely for all future bookings, (b) provide it as of right to any function organizer whose request is approved under 3.3 above, or (c) provide this facility only for functions which are approved under 3.3[a] or 3.3[d] above. However these hospitality facilities will NOT be made available to other public sector bodies in line with existing practice.</p>
3.6	<p>Members will be aware that the Committee previously decided that ‘commercial’ functions may be controlled via the imposition of a ‘once-in-three-years’ requirement. In this report ‘commercial’ is defined not only as covering ‘for-profit’ events but also events which, if not accommodated in City Hall, would need to avail of private-sector facilities and pay a commercial rate. It will of course be open to the Committee to apply this once-in-three-years restriction to any booking request tabled in the monthly report. However situations will almost certainly arise where a particular request – though not clearly out-with the agreed criteria – is at best an imperfect fit; in these circumstances officers will put the request before the Committee but will make no recommendation as to acceptance or rejection. It would then be for the Committee to take the necessary decision, including the imposition of a once-in-three-years restriction where appropriate.</p>
3.7	<p>It is also proposed that, where a request is made for the use of a function room in circumstances where there is insufficient time to present the matter to the Committee or where the request is of a minor nature and is non-contentious, authority be delegated to the Director of Property & Projects to approve or reject such requests on the basis that any exercise of</p>

	<p>this authority will be reported back to the Committee as soon as is practicable for note.</p> <p>3.8 Once the revised criteria have been finalised and approved it is proposed that the transfer of responsibility for the management of function requests be transferred to the Civic HQ Unit of the Facilities Management Section with effect from 1st April 2017. This will allow time for that unit to be re-structured in order to provide the necessary resources to take on this and a number of other changes to its role & responsibilities, most notably the opening of the new Exhibition Area in May 2017.</p> <p>3.9 The format of the monthly reports to the Committee in respect of civic hospitality will be altered so as to make recommendations in relation to functions which comply with the agreed criteria, and will also separately highlight those functions to which it is recommended that a drinks reception be provided. Functions which could be accepted only on the basis of the once-in-three-years provisions will also be summarised and highlighted for consideration by the Committee and decisions sought.</p> <p>3.10 In terms of applicability, if the Committee is minded to approve the revised criteria and other matters set out herein, it is proposed that all function bookings received after 1st April 2017 will be assessed and dealt with in line with the revised criteria. The principal issue is the acceptability of the proposed revised set of criteria set out herein which would govern access to the council's prestige function rooms in future together with the imposition of a once-in-three-years provision for specific functions.</p> <p>3.11 The issue of civic hospitality must also be addressed. The Committee may wish to adopt the approach set out in 3.5(c) above in this regard.</p> <p>3.12 Other key issues are the creation of a scheme of delegated authority, as is the proposed date for the transfer of responsibility to the Civic HQ Unit.</p> <p>Other City Hall Matters</p> <p>East Entrance Closure</p> <p>3.13 Members are asked to agree to make the East Entrance an exit only door to facilitate the management of the new memorabilia project beginning 2017/18.</p> <p>The key issues are as follows:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the opening of the Exhibition Area will inevitably change the dynamics of the ways in which people interact with the City Hall building; • the Exhibition Area would be very difficult to manage as currently configured, due to the
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	<p>number of access/exit points;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it will be important for the council to maximise the throughput of the exhibition facility and to have in place effective customer-management processes which complement the facility; • closing the East entrance could make a significant contribution to this although it is acknowledged that there are both advantages and disadvantages to this approach. <p>Bobbin</p> <p>3.14 With regard to the Bobbin closure the Council has, unfortunately, no choice but to close the Bobbin area from October to February to carry out the necessary works. Whilst there is no contracted obligation to the current Bobbin operator Council Officers have been seeking to alleviate the situation as far as possible.</p> <p>3.15 Council Officers have had a number of meetings with The Bobbin operator who has confirmed that they would only be interested in a temporary facility in the front entrance. Unfortunately this is totally impractical due to the need to provide the necessary services. Furthermore work will begin in this room in December as part of the memorabilia project. The Bobbin operator has also applied to be part of the extended Christmas continental market from November and the Council will do what it can to support this.</p> <p>3.16 One further possibility if Council is minded to provide additional assistance is that the current operator could be offered a new temporary contract at a reduced rate to operate the restored Bobbin from around February 2017 until the new catering contract is let. This is of interest to Now Catering.</p> <p>3.17 Members are asked to agree to offer a temporary contract to the Bobbin operator for early 2017.</p> <p>3.18 <u>Resource Implications</u></p> <p>As set out above, it will be necessary to review the resources available to the Civic HQ Unit in relation to taking on this and a number of other new functions (management of the new Exhibition Area, 'landlord' role in the new premises at 9-21 Adelaide St etc) and these will be set out in a separate report showing revised structures and costs to the Committee for approval.</p> <p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></p>
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3.19	There are no direct equality implications arising from this report.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
4.1	None