

# Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 9th September, 2011

## MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Hargey (Chairman);  
Aldermen Browne and Campbell;  
Councillors Convery, Garrett, Haire, Hanna,  
Hendron, Lavery, Maskey, McKee, McVeigh,  
Mac Giolla Mhín, Ó Muilleoir, Newton and Reynolds.

In attendance: Mr. C Quigley, Assistant Chief Executive;  
Mr. G. Millar, Director of Property and Projects;  
Mr. S. McCrory, Democratic Services Manager; and  
Mr. B. Flynn, Democratic Services Officer.

### Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Alderman Newton and Councillors Attwood, Jones and Mallon.

### Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 5th and 19th August were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st September.

### National Association of Councillors - Annual General Meeting

The Committee was advised that the National Association of Councillors (Northern Ireland Region) would be hosting its Annual General Meeting in the Clondeboye Lodge Hotel, Bangor, on Tuesday, 20th September. The Democratic Services Manager reported that the keynote address at the Meeting would be delivered by the Minister for the Environment, Mr. Alex Attwood M.L.A., and that the Association would be electing its office bearers for the following year. It was noted that attendance at the Meeting per delegate would be in the region of £36.00.

The Committee agreed to authorise the attendance at the Meeting of the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman, the Council's representatives on the National Association of Councillors (Northern Ireland Region) and a representative from each of the Political Parties on the Council not represented by the aforementioned Members.

### **Review of the Future Use and Management of the City Hall**

The Director of Property and Projects outlined the principal aspects of a report which provided an overview of the current usage of the City Hall and outlined a range of options for the future management of the building. He then provided additional information in respect of the options outlined and then answered a range of questions and clarified a number of queries from the Members in connection with the report.

A Member expressed general support for the notion that the Council should seek to promote the use of the City Hall by external organisations on the principle that charges should be levied on a 'not for profit / not for loss' basis. However, it was pointed out that such a policy should be balanced and not impact adversely on those organisations within the community, voluntary or charitable sectors who wished to use the building. In respect of charging for tours of the City Hall, the Member, whilst opposing the imposition of charges, expressed support for the notion that voluntary donations to a nominated charity might be sought from visitors. In addition, he suggested that the issue of tours of the building should be considered within the context of the City's diverse population and addressed thematically in conjunction with the ongoing review of memorabilia displayed within the building. He added that the Council would be required also to address the marketing and promotion of the building to make it more accessible to a wider audience as the premier tourist attraction in the City.

A further Member indicated that the proposals outlined should be considered within the context of the current financial climate. It was pointed out that the Council could leave itself open to criticism should it opt to impose charges on organisations representing the community, voluntary and charitable sectors for the use of the building. The Member added that the onus remained on the Council to ensure that organisations who wished to use the City Hall for purely commercial purposes should be charged at an appropriate and competitive rate. In respect of tours of the building, it was suggested that no charges be levied during normal opening hours but that charges could be made to organisations seeking tours on behalf of cruise ship operators or at evenings or weekends. It was pointed out that it was essential that a more detailed report providing details of the potential financial costs and benefits which the Council might realise should it opt to charge on a 'not for profit / not for loss' basis for the use of the building would be required before a final report could be considered.

Further Members indicated support for charging cruise ship operators for private tours of the City Hall. The view was expressed that charges could be levied for the use of the East Wing Exhibition Area. However, it was accepted that significant costs would be incurred by the Council in upgrading the aforementioned area to professional exhibition standard. Concerns were raised also regarding the maintenance of the City Hall's status as a working building. It was suggested that this issue must be taken into consideration within the context of the building's primary role as a municipal seat of Local Government and that the Committee must, at all times, be responsible for the management and granting of the use of the building.

In response to a Member's query in respect of the income generated by the sale of Council souvenirs within the City Hall, the Director of Property and Projects undertook to provide information in relation thereto.

After further discussion, the Committee agreed, in principle, that:

- (i) the Council should seek to introduce a scale of charges for the hiring of rooms within the City Hall and the use of its grounds on the principle of 'not for profit / not for loss';
- (ii) community, voluntary and charitable organisations should not be affected adversely by the adoption of such a policy and that the needs of the aforementioned sectors should be addressed sympathetically within any scale of charges submitted for consideration; and
- (iii) the Council should not charge for tours of the City Hall within normal opening hours. However, it should reserve the right to recover costs on a 'not for profit / not for loss' basis for those booked outside of normal opening hours and on behalf of cruise ship operators.

It was noted that the foregoing decision would be subject to the submission of further detailed reports which would outline the potential costs, including staffing and maintenance, which might be incurred by the Council in adopting such a policy and which would provide also an indication of the direct financial benefit which the Council might accrue.

Chairman