

City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group

Wednesday, 11th October, 2023

THE CITY HALL/CITY HALL GROUNDS INSTALLATIONS WORKING GROUP MINUTES

HYBRID MEETING IN THE CONOR ROOM

Members present: Councillor Beattie (Chairperson);
Alderman Lawlor; and
Councillor Flynn.

In attendance: Mr. M. McCann, Belfast City Innovation Programme Lead,
Ms. B. Murphy, City Innovation Broker,
Ms. K. Mullen, Client Manager;
Mr. M. Doherty, Programme Delivery Manager;
Ms. A. Milliken, Functions and Exhibition Manager and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Election of Chairperson

The Working Group agreed that Councillor Beattie be elected to serve as Chairperson for the period to end on the date of the annual meeting of the Council in June 2024.

(Councillor Beattie in the Chair.)

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Murray.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 22nd February, 2023 were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Presentation - Immersive Experience at City Hall

The City Innovation Broker provided an overview of the Smart Belfast Project, which was to establish a world class emotionally engaging immersive experience in the City Hall exhibition to complement and enhance the existing exhibition. She highlighted that this would contribute to the wider aims of Belfast 2024 and be focused in three rooms

of the current exhibition: City Speech, City Streets, Child at Play. She pointed out that this would be delivered in collaboration with BT and was scheduled to open in April 2024.

The City Innovation Broker advised that 500 visitors to the City Hall had been surveyed during June 2023 and she provided a breakdown of the demographics and analysis. She pointed out that satisfaction overall was very high and explained that, although pre-planning to visit the exhibition was low, with 76% respondents finding out about the exhibition while in the building, curiosity was the primary purpose of 58% of the respondents and 51% had spent greater than 30 minutes in the exhibition.

She outlined the progress towards delivery of the experience included internal workshops to agree the Creative Brief and finalising the agreement with BT, with a view to commence work early in the new year, subject to approval from the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

During discussion, the officers explained further that the new immersive experience intended to complement the current exhibition and its narrative and would not disrupt the previous agreements surrounding the artefacts currently exhibited.

After discussion, the Working Group noted the information provided and welcomed the forthcoming immersive experience.

City Hall Conservation Update

The Functions and Exhibition Manager provided an update on the City Hall Artworks and Artefacts conservation project and projects that had been completed to improve the Visitor Exhibition.

During discussion, the Functions and Exhibition Manager described the use of different language audio headsets to supplement the exhibition and advised that statistics on the Lord Mayor Portraits could be provided to the Working Group.

Noted.

Exhibition Artefact and Memorabilia Update

The Functions and Exhibition Manager reported that approval was sought for two new artefacts to be added to the City Hall Visitor Exhibition, namely: an Olympic Medal won by boxer John McNally in 1952; and an official invite to the opening of the City Hall in 1906. She also informed the Working Group of the proposal for the relocation of the artefacts cabinet currently situated in the Reception Room to a location on the City Hall East Exhibition Area.

During discussion, the Chairperson raised a query in relation to updating the 'City Celebrates' part of the exhibition on a regular basis. The Functions and Exhibition Manager advised that a list of potential changes has been maintained and would be updated in the future, however, short-term changes to the theme would also be explored.

After discussion, the Working Group approved the inclusion of the two artefacts in City Hall Visitor Exhibition and approved the relocation of the artefacts cabinet from the Reception Room.

Frederick Douglass Update

The Working Group was reminded that the unveiling of Frederick Douglass took place on 31st July, 2023 in Belfast City Centre. The Lord Mayor of Belfast, Professor Kinealy, Takura Donald Makoni (ASCONI) and Alan Beattie Herriot had formally unveiled Frederick Douglass at an event which had been well attended.

During discussion, the Chairperson thanked the Client Manager and the Project Team for their hard work and accomplishments.

The Client Manager advised that, following the event, ACSONI (African and Caribbean Support Organisation Northern Ireland) had requested a meeting with the Lord Mayor at which there had been a request that Frederick Douglass was highlighted and promoted by the Council. She advised that it had been suggested that a 'SEE More Belfast' marker was located on 'A Trade Too Far' panel within the City Hall exhibition.

She stated that a further proposal would be that a QR code be placed on or near the Frederick Douglass statue which would link back to information on Council's website and suggested that the QR code be placed on the services box to the front of the statue. She advised that the information on Council's website would be based on the booklet produced for the launch.

After discussion, the Working Group:

- Noted the feedback received on the commissioning, installation and unveiling of Frederick Douglass on 31st July, 2023;
- Agreed to the inclusion of a SEE More Belfast pointer at a relevant location with the City Hall exhibition; and
- Agreed to the installation of a QR code on or near the Frederick Douglass statue linking back to the Council's website.

#Douglass Week 2024

The Working Group considered the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

To consider a request from The Globe Lane Initiative (a US non-profit organisation) to act as partner with events for #DW2024 (#Douglass Week 2024).

To include:-

- **Promotion of their events on Council's website, reposting social media posts**
- **Provision of venues for events during #DW2024**
- **Financial support for specific events (to be confirmed once event calendar has been firmed up)**
- **That the Lord Mayor of Belfast give a speech and hold a reception as part of #DW2024**

- That Council host and event as part of #DW2024
- To identify a lead Department/Officer to work with the Globe Lane Initiative to put in place plans, identify budgets for consideration by Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

2.0 Recommendations

The Working Group is asked to:

- Give consideration to a request to act as partner in the development, programming and financing of #Douglass Week 2024
- Host a reception part of #Douglass Week 2024
- Identify a lead department/officer to take the work forward, identify financial asks for consideration by Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
- Give consideration to a request from Anti-Slavery Belfast to borrow the Frederick Douglass maquette to promote Frederick Douglass Week at the Black History Month Expo to be held in St George's Market on Wednesday 25 October 2023
- Give consideration to an invitation which has been extended to Lord Mayor and Councillors by 'Anti-Slavery Belfast' to take part in a walking tour on a date to be agreed with Members

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

The fourth annual #Douglass Week will take place in Belfast Spring 2024. The #Douglass Week event series celebrates and advances the legacy of Frederick Douglass around the world. The week includes discussions, performances, exhibitions and events designed to promote collaboration and engagement and to highlight and further the influence of Douglass and other changemakers.

#Douglass Week is organised by The Globe Lane Initiative, a US non-profit organisation. Belfast Partners confirmed as of September 2023 are Queen's University, Anti-Slavery Tours Belfast, Craft NI, The John and Pat Hume Foundation, Northern Ireland Bureau and the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

The Globe Lane Initiative have advised discussions are underway with ASCONI, PRONI, JoinHer, National Museum NI, University of Ulster, Maynooth University, Thomas Annang Drumming, Clifton House, Linenhall Library in relation to potential partnership opportunities.

A scoping call took place early September 2023 with Belfast City Council Officers to explore the opportunity for partnership working, to host and stage, events as part of #Douglass Week 2024. In previous years the event has been hosted in Cork and in Boston. The week's core events are centred around a number of strands, literature, history, creative, education, sporting, with 'Douglass Dialogues' for each.

The Globe Initiative have now formally requested that Council act as partner to host, promotion and financially support events to be held in Belfast Spring 2024. This requires Council to identify a lead department and officer to work with The Globe Initiative to develop a fully costed event plan for consideration by Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

In addition, a request has been received from Anti-Slavery Belfast (a group who are working in a voluntary capacity with Global Lane to promote #Douglass Week 2024) to borrow the Frederick Douglass maquette. They plan to use the maquette at their stand at the Black History Month Expo to be held in St George's Market on Wednesday 25 October 2023 to promote #Douglass Week. Should members be minded to accede to the request, officers will confirm with Legal Services should a loan agreement be required. The maquette is a one off piece and any damage requiring repair would incur cost.

Anti-Slavery Belfast have also extended an invitation to Lord Mayor and Councillors to participate in one of their Frederick Douglass Walking Tours on a date to be agreed. services box to the front of the statue. The information on Council's website would be based on the booklet produced for the launch

Members are asked to:

- Give consideration to a request to act as partner in the development, programming and financing of #Douglass Week 2024
- Host a reception part of #Douglass Week 2024
- Identify a lead department/officer to take the work forward, identify financial asks for consideration by Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
- Give consideration to a request from Anti-Slavery Belfast to borrow the Frederick Douglass maquette to promote Frederick Douglass Week at the Black History Month Expo to be held in St George's Market on Wednesday 25 October 2025
- Give consideration to an invitation which has been extended to Lord Mayor and Councillors

by 'Anti-Slavery Belfast' to take participate in a walking tour on a date to be agreed with Members

Financial and Resource Implications

Budget – costs to be brought back through Committee as event planning is finalised and venues sourced.

Resources – Officer time as required to work up proposals

Equality or Good Relations Implications

As required.”

After discussion, the Working Group agreed to the recommendations, in principle, subject to a defined programme of events and funding requirements.

The Working Group also noted that the lending of the Frederick Douglass maquette would be subject to a loan agreement.

City Hall Statues Update

The Working Group was provided with an update on the current status of the design, manufacture and installation of the City Hall statues: Winifred Carney and Mary Ann McCracken. The Client Manager described the plans for the unveiling of the statues and the supporting programme of events.

After discussion, the Working Group:

- Noted the progress with the design and manufacture of the City Hall Statues: Winifred Carney and Mary Ann McCracken;
- Agreed that International Womens' Day – Friday, 8th March 2024 would be an appropriate date for the unveiling event; and
- Noted the intended programme of events and required budget, subject to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approval.

Fire Service Blitz Memorial City Hall

The Working Group was reminded that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting in March, had agreed that a permanent memorial to all of the Fire Services efforts during the Belfast Blitz be included as a Stage 1 Emerging Project on the capital programme.

The Client Manager advised that discussions had previously taken place with representatives from Fire Brigade Unions, both Belfast and Dublin, and it had been suggested that a permanent piece in the form of a resin cast of a fire brigade helmet be procured and installed.

During discussion, the Client Manager answered questions in relation to the Stained Glass Window Projects and advised that a further update would be submitted to the Working Group for consideration in December.

After discussion, the Working Group agreed to progress the installation of a permanent memorial to all of the Fire Services efforts during the Belfast Blitz and move it to Stage 2 (Uncommitted) on the capital programme.

Chairperson