



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Invitations to attend the 2010 Somme and Gallipoli Pilgrimages
Date:	22nd January, 2010
Reporting Officer:	Mr. L. Steele, Head of Committee and Members' Services
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Relevant Background Information

Correspondence has been received from the Somme Association enquiring if the Council would wish to be represented on the 2010 Pilgrimages to the Somme, France from 28th June until 2nd July, 2010 and to Gallipoli, Turkey in March, 2010. The Somme Pilgrimage, to mark the 94th Anniversary of the battle, will follow the route taken by the 36th (Ulster) and 16th (Irish) Divisions during their service in the First World War. Services of Commemoration will be held in both Thiepval and Guillemont, in addition to attendance at the Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate, Ypres.

The Somme Association has not undertaken a pilgrimage to Gallipoli for a number of years but has maintained formal relations with the Governor and Mayor of the Province of Cannakale since 2002. During the pilgrimage, a foundation stone will be laid for a new Memorial to the 10th (Irish) Division at Chocolate Hill.

Key Issues

In previous years, the Committee has authorised the attendance on the Somme tour of a representative of each of the Party Groupings on the Council. Members who have attended have found the event to be informative and worthwhile in that several of the ceremonial occasions were attended by many other dignitaries and officials, which afforded an opportunity for contacts to be made and relations to be developed on a range of topics and for the profile and image of Belfast to be promoted.

The Council, in 1997, 1999 and 2000, decided that it should not be represented on the Gallipoli Pilgrimage as those visits had not marked any particular anniversary. However, in 2002 the Council, during the last Pilgrimage to Gallipoli, had approved the attendance of an All-Party deputation.

It should be noted that the Somme Pilgrimage tour coincides with the Council's own Somme Remembrance Ceremony as well as the monthly meeting of the Council on 1st July and accordingly Members who attend the Pilgrimage would be unable to be in attendance at those events.

Resource Implications

Financial

Somme Pilgrimage

The cost per person of attendance is approximately £640 plus the appropriate subsistence allowance, provision for which has been made within the Revenue Budget.

Gallipoli Pilgrimage

The approximate cost of attending is £440 per person plus the appropriate subsistence allowance.

Human Resources

There are no Human Resource implications associated with this report.

Recommendations

- (i) Given the fact that the Council, by holding its own Somme Remembrance Service, recognises the importance of the Battle of the Somme to the people of Belfast and that Members normally attend the Somme Pilgrimage to recognise the sacrifice of the 36th (Ulster) and 16th (Irish) Divisions, the Committee is recommended to approve attendance on the Somme tour of a representative of each of the Party Groupings on the Council and the Chief Executive (or his nominee) and authorise the payment of the appropriate travel and subsistence allowances in connection therewith; and
- (ii) since the Council has on a number of occasions in the past declined the invitation to participate on the Gallipoli Pilgrimage and is attempting currently to effect savings in terms of future expenditure commitments, the Committee is recommended not to accept the invitation to participate on the Gallipoli Tour.