



### Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Use of City Hall lawns by Belfast Community Circus (Festival of Fools)</b>
<b>Date:</b>	19 <sup>th</sup> February 2010
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	George Wright – Head of Facilities Management – Ext.5206
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Peter McKay – Ext. 6233

#### Relevant Background Information

As Members will be aware, the Committee has delegated authority for routine requests for use of the City Hall grounds etc. to the Director of Property & Projects, on the basis of an agreed set of criteria. However it was recognized that there would still be occasions on which the nature, scale and/or scope of the request means that it is appropriate to place the matter directly before the Committee. The request detailed below falls into this category, and the direction of the Committee is therefore sought.

Members should note that the following request has just been received due to the fact that the organisers have only very recently secured funding for the overall festival. Late reports are always regrettable, however this report is necessary at this time because presenting the matter to the March Committee would not allow sufficient time for the event to be properly marketed and promoted, in the view of the organisers and of the Council's Culture & Arts unit.

A request has been received from The Belfast Community Circus School to use the City Hall east lawn as a venue for the opening act of the "**Festival of Fools**" event. The Festival of Fools event was established by Belfast Community Circus School in 2004 and is Northern Ireland's only street theatre festival. It provides free, accessible, high quality street theatre, involving local and international artists. Audiences for 2009 were estimated to be around 42,000 overall, testifying to the demand for the activity. Members may recall that a similar application was made in respect of this event in October 2008 and was approved (although a similar request in 2007 had been rejected).

This application is for a single evening event on Thursday **29<sup>th</sup> April 2010** from approx. **6pm – 8pm** (including preparation and dismantling time) using the lawns on the East side of the building. The event itself is entitled "**Mr Pejo's Wandering Dolls**". The Culture & Arts unit of the Development Department feels that the event would offer a number of benefits, most notably to:-

- provide a positive opportunity for people to come together in a celebratory atmosphere in a shared space;
- provide a platform for us to raise awareness through the media of what Council is doing to position Belfast as a City of Festivals; *and*
- increase footfall in the city centre – thereby helping to support the evening economy.

This festival is financially supported by Belfast City Council through an annual grant administered by the Culture and Arts Unit and, if approved, this particular event is anticipated to attract a crowd in the order of 200-300. All additional stewarding will be provided by the organisers at their expense, and no access to the main building is needed, although the

organisers have indicated that it would be very useful if the performers could access an area of the building in order to change etc., and this can easily be facilitated.

From a practical point of view there would be minimal potential disruption to the normal routines within the City Hall grounds, and there are no potential clashes with other scheduled events at time of writing.

### **Key Issues**

The usual necessary assurances will be required of the organisers, most notably:-

- that an appropriate level of indemnity in respect of loss, damage or personal injury will be provided for the Council;
- that the impact on the normal operation of the grounds will be minimal;
- that all incidental costs associated with the event, including additional stewarding costs, will be borne by the organisers; *and*
- that the lawns will be kept intact so far as possible, and any damage made good where necessary.

### **Resource Implications**

#### Financial

There are no significant direct costs for the council associated with this request.

#### Human Resources

No additional resources are required, as any additional security and stewarding staff would be the responsibility of the organisers.

#### Asset and other implications

There are no significant implications for the integrity of the Councils assets.

### **Recommendation/Decision**

It is recommended that the Committee approve the use of the City Hall grounds for the purposes as set out above, subject only to the Director of Property & Projects being satisfied as to the level of indemnity and other necessary safeguards and obligations offered by the organisers.

### **Documents Attached**

None.