



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	<i>WORLD POLICE & FIRE GAMES – PROVISION OF ACCOMMODATION</i>
Date:	24 September 2010
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Relevant Background Information

As Members may already be aware, the World Police and Fire Games (WPFG) are coming to Belfast in 2013. The Police Service of Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service and Northern Ireland Prison Service will host approximately 10,000 law-enforcement officers and fire-fighters from around the world who will compete in a wide variety of sporting events.

The WPFG event is a larger participation sporting event than the Commonwealth Games, bringing an estimated 15,000-20,000 uniformed-services competitors and family members to Northern Ireland from more than 70 countries worldwide for the duration of the Games. In all, the competitors will participate in more than 60 sports (individual and team) that will showcase sporting excellence, health and well-being. The games are held every 2 years, and in recent years the event has been held in cities such as New York, Adelaide, Quebec and Barcelona.

The Council is already supporting the funding of the games with a contribution of £400,000. However a request has recently been received from the event organisers in the hope that it may be possible to provide access to Council accommodation for a group of approx. 27 staff made up of both existing council employees and staff seconded from other organizations, whose role is to organise and co-ordinate the games. These staff would require accommodation for a period of about 30 months in the run-up to and during the games in the summer of 2013.

The Committee will be aware that we are currently approaching the end of a planned series of decants designed to rationalise the council's property portfolio and generate efficiencies by surrendering costly leases and improving utilization of existing property.

At the conclusion of this process a single half-floor will be temporarily available on the 4th floor South in the Cecil Ward Building (originally planned to allow for any transfer of staff under RPA etc) and this area could, if the Committee is so minded, be made available to the games organisers for the required period.

However, if this area is to be offered to the organisers (who will be a company limited by guarantee) then the issue of charging must be considered. The Local Government Act (NI) 1972 [sec 96(5)] provides that councils must "dispose of land at the best price or best rent or otherwise on the best terms that can be reasonably obtained". However the Legal Services Department has advised that, under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions)(Northern Ireland) Order 2002 (Art. 8) the Council has the power to promote economic development within its district and in so doing may make a financial contribution where appropriate, and that the arrangement proposed herein would satisfy this criterion.

In addition the Recreation & Youth Services (NI) Order 1986 provides that councils shall secure the provision for its area of adequate facilities for recreational social and physical and cultural facilities and may assist, by financial contributions, or otherwise any person to establish, maintain and manage any such facilities or to organise any such activities, and Legal Services have also advised that the criterion in this Order would also be satisfied.

The Estates Unit have confirmed that current commercial leasing costs for city-centre office accommodation of a similar standard and on basis of non-exclusive occupation as in the current situation are in the order of £9-£11 per ft², and the working area in question is 3,085 ft². Adjusting for the fact that approx. 37% of the staff will be existing BCC employees for whom no charge would be made (unless any secondments are backfilled), this would involve a charge to the WPFGE organisers of **£17,492** per annum based on £9 per ft², plus an appropriate contribution in terms of utility costs.

However, given the statutory powers and provisions outlined above the Committee can, if so minded, agree to absorb a greater proportion of the overall costs and thereby reduce the annual charge to the organisers. If approval is granted a Licence will be prepared and executed by the Legal Services Department.

The decanting, equipment and other costs associated with this arrangement in respect of non-BCC staff would not be covered by this arrangement and would be the responsibility of the respective organizations.

Committee should note that the Belfast City Marathon Ltd a smaller but similar type company pay a commercial rent for Council premises at the Stables in Lady Dixon Park.

Key Issues

The key issues are:-

- (a) whether or not the Committee wishes to extend an invitation to the WPFGE organisers in respect of the 4th floor (S) of the Cecil Ward Building for the period involved *and, if so*;
- (b) on what financial basis this offer would be made.

Resource Implications

Staffing/HR

There will be no direct staffing implications.

Finance

This would depend on whether or not the request is approved and on what financial basis.

Assets

There may be a corporate implication in that this area will not be available for BCC use for the duration of the arrangement if approved. However following the completion of the current sequence of decants there is no immediate requirement for this area, and the postponement of RPA would allow its use until 2013 as requested.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee approve that an offer of accommodation for the WPFG organising team be made in respect of the 4th floor (South) of the Cecil Ward Building for the specified period, on the basis of an annual charge of £17,492 plus utilities, or of such other sum as the Committee may determine.

Key to Abbreviations

None.

Documents Attached

None.