



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Poster for Tomorrow exhibition
Date:	24 th September 2010
Reporting Officer:	Gerry Millar, Director of Property & Projects
Contact Officer:	George Wright – Head of Facilities Management (ext.5206/6232)

Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that on 18th June 2010 the Committee debated the original request from an organization named 'Poster for Tomorrow' to use the City Hall grounds for a poster exhibition in respect of their international campaign to have capital punishment abolished. The issue was discussed at some length and went to a vote, resulting in the request being approved.

At full Council in July the matter was referred back at the request of a member. The report was therefore considered again by the Committee on 20th August 2010 and, following a further debate, the original decision was re-affirmed by the Committee, and subsequently ratified by Council.

At the outset the Committee was advised that, given the subject-matter, the exhibition would obviously have the potential to offend but that the council would have the option to 'veto' specific images if concern was expressed. It should also be acknowledged that, in the course of the first debate on this matter, the Chair specifically raised the issue of the council seeking to exercise a veto over the exhibition's content, and warned that this could be construed as censorship.

The decisions taken in respect of this matter at that time were, of course, taken without the benefit of having the proposed images to hand, because the organisers had not agreed or prepared the final artwork when permission was first sought back in June 2010. The final artwork was requested by the Facilities Management Section and has now been received and circulated to a number of senior officers for comment. It appears from the comments received that a significant sub-set of the material gives some cause for concern amongst officers particularly from Good Relations and Corporate Communications. On foot of this the organisers were reminded of their commitment that BCC could veto particular images, however they have responded by suggesting that they may cancel the event entirely if this were to occur on any significant scale. COMT considered the issue this week and feel that committee needed to be alerted to this matter hence this late report.

Obviously if the organisers are asked and agree to withdraw any images from the exhibition they will wish to replace these images with others, which would also need to be 'vetted' before inclusion.

This event is scheduled to take place on 7th - 10th **October 2010** so there would not be a great deal of time in which to address these issues, and the organisers are obviously keen to finalise their preparations.

It should also be noted that this exhibition will be taking place alongside a BBC children's event in the City Hall grounds, although the 2 events will be physically separate.

The full proposed set of images provided by the organisers is attached to this report at Appendix 1.

Key Issues

The Committee is requested to consider whether, in the light of the images supplied, the Committee wishes to review or revise its previous decision in this matter.

Resource Implications

There are no direct resource implications in respect of this report.

Recommendations

The Committee's direction is sought in terms of whether or not to approve this request.

Key to Abbreviations

None.

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – complete list of proposed images for use in the 'Poster for Tomorrow' exhibition