



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Application for use of City Hall grounds to hold a Tesco “Taste Northern Ireland” food event</b>
<b>Date:</b>	21 <sup>st</sup> January 2011
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	G Millar, Director of Property & Projects
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	George Wright, Head of Facilities Management (Ext. 6232/5206)

### Relevant Background Information

- 1.1 Members will be aware that 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.
- 1.2 A formal request has been received from Tesco to organise a **“Taste Northern Ireland”** consumer food event in the grounds of the City Hall in late August or early September 2011 (exact dates to be confirmed). Essentially this would involve Tesco inviting local food and beverage producers to participate in a 2 or 3-day event aimed at show-casing local produce to consumers.
- 1.3 The event would take place in a covered marquee which would be approx. 1,300m<sup>2</sup> in size. Exhibitors would populate stands with their products, literature and own branding, often adding cookery demonstrations and other similar activities to add interest. They may make sales direct to the public and can also issue vouchers which consumers can use in-store. A cookery kitchen inside the marquee would operate for the duration of the event, giving local restaurant chefs the opportunity to promote their businesses to potential customers in addition to providing educational cookery sessions etc. A ‘kidzone’ would be provided for visiting children, themed around food production. Similar events have been held at other venues in recent years (including one in partnership with Glasgow City Council) and have apparently attracted attendances of up to 12,500.
- 1.4 The various exhibitors would pay exhibitor fees to Tesco in order to participate in the event, however the Tesco application emphasizes that “in return for exhibitor fees we will provide logistical and other support, plus a marketing campaign which will drive high visitor numbers. The event is non profit-making and Tesco will be far and away the main funder”. It should,

however, be noted that the entire event would carry fairly prominent Tesco branding.

- 1.5 No fast-food or similar vendors are permitted to participate, so there would be little in the way of direct competition with city-centre based retailers. The organisers do not require any access to the main City Hall building, although they will require use of the electrical infrastructure to provide power to the various appliances etc.
- 1.6 In terms of marketing, the event would be promoted via ‘billboards, a partnership with a local radio station, a PR campaign, leafleting at busy locations around Belfast and leafleting in all local Tesco stores’.
- 1.7 Tesco has indicated that there may be an opportunity, if desired, to develop a joint message with BCC in relation to the in-store leafleting and marketing campaign. Tesco has asserted that that it would be willing to offer “the opportunity for BCC to promote some of its own projects and activities at Tesco stores, which have a very high reach into local communities particularly for families...whether via literature or manned, i.e. we can explore opportunities for the partnership [to] work to enhance BCC's interests beyond the event itself”.
- 1.8 Discussions have therefore taken place with Corporate Communications in relation to these potential opportunities and - if the Committee is minded to avail of and maximise these opportunities – it has been suggested that this could best be achieved through the inclusion of the council’s Advertising Manager in the team developing the PR and marketing campaign, in order to ensure that BCC's reputation and key messages are protected and promoted.

### **Key Issues**

- 2.1 Members will be aware that the Committee has previously been reluctant to permit events of a largely commercial nature to use the City Hall grounds. This event could certainly be regarded as commercial in nature given the overall Tesco branding, although Tesco do contend that the principal purpose is to allow local food producers who sell to Tesco to ‘gather and celebrate the excellence of food produced in Northern Ireland’.
- 2.2 Tesco also suggest that the use of “City Hall as a venue underscores the agri-food industry’s importance to the local economy more than any other venue”. It emphasizes the Tesco contribution to the local economy in terms of employing over 9,200 staff, buying local goods to the value of £500m in 2010 and having more local suppliers than any other major retailer.
- 2.3 Members will also be conscious of the potential for creating a precedent in this case, as there are of course a number of other significant retailers (Sainsburys, Asda, Marks & Spencer etc) who have occasionally expressed an interest in using the grounds in the past and who may be encouraged to make formal applications should this event be permitted to proceed.
- 2.4 Finally, this would be a quite significant event in terms of its scale and scope but would generate no income for the council under the current arrangements (unlike, for example, the Continental Market which operates under specific contractual arrangements and does generate income).
- 2.5 Members will be aware that a special meeting of this Committee has already been agreed to consider a report on the future use of City Hall, including the issue of charging for the use of the

main building and grounds etc, and may wish to defer taking a decision on the Tesco request until the wider strategic discussion has taken place, although Tesco has indicated that it will require a decision soon in order to proceed with event-planning and marketing etc.

#### **Resource Implications**

- 3.1 There will be no direct resource implications in respect of this application as the organisers will make the appropriate arrangements in terms of stewarding etc. No access to the main building is required, and the organisers would be required to comply with all standard terms and conditions including legal indemnities and lawn re-instatement etc if approval is given.

#### **Decision(s) required**

- 4.1 The direction of the Committee is therefore sought on whether or not to approve the request by Tesco for use of the City Hall grounds for the stated purpose and, if so, whether it wishes to impose any specific conditions.
- 4.2 In addition, if the Committee is minded to approve the application, it would be useful if the Committee could indicate the basis on which this approval is given, namely either (a) as a 'partner' in the event in terms of the marketing and promotional activities outlined above or (b) as a simple facilitator, providing the site for the event on the basis of the usual requirements and legal obligations etc. but without any connection or linkage to the event itself.

#### **Key to Abbreviations**

None.

#### **Documents Attached**

None.