



## **REVIEW OF FUTURE USE AND MANAGEMENT OF CITY HALL INITIAL CONSIDERATION PAPER**

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is set out for Members consideration some of the early findings and issues which have emerged from an **initial internal review** of the current and potential future use and management of the City Hall and associated policy and procedural issues. The report examines in detail the following key areas:

1. Criteria for the use of the City Hall
2. Scope to introduce a policy for the charging of function room hire in City Hall
3. Booking of events in the City Hall
4. Catering for City Hall events
5. City Hall Tours
6. City Hall Grounds (including the criteria for the use of City Hall grounds, accountability and scope to introduce charging)

The report sets out the current position with regard to each policy area; examines good practice applied elsewhere; outlines the potential options available; and in certain cases makes recommendations where appropriate.

### **CONTEXT**

The City Hall is the most prestigious building in the city of Belfast and is one of the most instantly recognisable symbols of the city. It has a unique, iconic status and is very much seen as the 'heart of the city'. Constructed at the turn of the C20th, it was opened officially in 1906 and celebrated its centenary in 2006. It was closed temporarily in October 2007 for an £11m refurbishment programme and was reopened in October 2009.

The City Hall is a working building which is in daily use as the civic headquarters of the Council. One of its key uses is to facilitate the 51 Elected Members of the Council in their role as civic leaders for the city. The building houses the Council Chamber where the monthly Council meetings are held and two meeting rooms (the Lavery Room and the Conor Room) which are set aside for the holding of Committee and other meetings. The building has three prestigious function areas: the Reception Room, the Banqueting Hall and the Great Hall. These rooms typically hold around 600 functions a year, attracting over 30,000 guests each year. These areas are serviced by an adjoining kitchen facility. The vast majority of applications for the use of the building relate to these rooms.

Following the renovation project a new coffee shop, the Bobbin, and permanent exhibition area were opened on the ground floor in October 2009. Exhibition space is also available in the East Wing area on the Ground Floor which holds a rolling series of exhibitions. A new interactive visitor information point has also recently opened on a trial basis in the foyer. The City Hall also provides offices for various Council departments. The City Hall is open to the public Monday to Saturday and free public and private tours of the City Hall are conducted on these days.

The City Hall also benefits from its extensive grounds which act as a focal point being the only green open space in the city centre. The grounds are open to the public and are particularly popular during spells of sunny weather. The grounds of the City Hall are frequently used for high profile public events including the Christmas and Spring Continental markets.

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## **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **ISSUE 1: Current use and management of the City Hall**

The City Hall is the most prestigious building in Belfast and is one of the most instantly recognisable symbols of the city. It has a unique, iconic status and is very much seen as the 'heart of the city'. As Belfast's most impressive asset it is crucial that the City Hall is protected and maintained for current and future generations to enjoy. It is therefore important that a robust framework is put in place which contains the policies and processes needed to govern its future role, management and use. Members will be aware that while there are currently a number of established policies and processes in place for the use and management of the City Hall many of these policies were created when the City Hall was less frequently used and/or they predate the Council's current organisational and decision-making structures. There are a number of other areas for which there are no explicit policies in place or else there are historic outdated policies.

As Members are aware, over the last few years the Council has been putting in place the processes, frameworks and structures needed to make it a '*fit for purpose*' local authority which can deliver the efficient, effective, value for money services that our citizens deserve. The City Hall is Belfast's most impressive and iconic asset and it is crucial that it is protected and maintained for current and future generations to enjoy. It is therefore important that a robust framework is put in place which contains the policies and processes needed to govern its future role, management and use.

Members are aware that while there are currently a number of established policies and processes in place for the use and management of the City Hall (e.g. booking of function rooms by external organisations, criteria of allowing use of the City Hall, booking of tours), many of these policies were created when the City Hall was less frequently used and/or they predate the Council's current organisational and decision-making structures.

Under the Standing Orders the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee has responsibility for '*the care, control and management of the City Hall*' and the Council has recently created a Department of Property & Projects with a Director who now has day to day responsibility for the management of the City Hall. Whilst the existing processes have worked well to date, it is suggested that they now need to be reviewed/refreshed to take account of these structural changes and to ensure that are effective, efficient and transparent.

## **What is the anticipated role of the City Hall? Impact on its future management and use?**

Given the issues highlighted above it is therefore timely to look at the development of a strategic, overarching framework for the future use and management of the City Hall and its grounds. This paper therefore outlines a number of options which it is suggested could help streamline the current processes and address any gaps which may exist in current policies. In doing so this paper outlines some of the general issues in respect of the management and governance arrangements for the City Hall and looks in detail at a number of key inter-related issues including tours, the function rooms, catering for events and the City Hall grounds.

Members will note that the policy areas, issues and options set out within this paper for Members consideration, fundamentally raise the key question of '**What is/should be the role of the City Hall and what sort of building do Members want the City Hall to be?**'. Clearly the answer to this will set the future strategic direction for the City Hall and will invariably impact on the options and decisions that Members will take in relation to the areas outlined in this paper.

As Members are aware, most events in the City Hall, both within the building and in the grounds, as well as the public and private tours are currently provided on a free basis to everyone (with the small exception of some of the larger events in the grounds – e.g. the Continental Market). This is in keeping with the decisions that Members have previously agreed on numerous occasions that, as the city's principal civic building and key asset, the City Hall should be as accessible as possible to everyone.

However, it could also be argued that the Council, in these difficult economic times, is missing out on a potential revenue stream which could be generated through the City Hall – either through the charging for room hire, events in the grounds or charging for tours or a combination of these. Indeed, best practice research has indicated that the vast majority of other local authorities in the UK and Ireland capitalise on their civic buildings, either through room hire charges or tour charges.

Members will note that complaints have recently been received from the commercial sector, asserting that providing free access to the City Hall is unfairly and unnecessarily depriving local businesses of commercial opportunities. Within this context this paper sets out a number of options which are available to Members in respect to the potential scope to introduce charges for room hire, tours or for use of the City Hall grounds. However Members will need to consider if the potential introduction of such charges would be inconsistent with trying to make the City Hall as accessible as possible.

Members are Therefore asked first and foremost to consider the central issue of what the role of the City Hall is/should be e.g.

- should it remain an open, accessible, free building for all?;
- should the Council seek to ensure that its costs are covered as a minimum so that these are not passed onto the ratepayer?; or
- should it operate on a more commercial type basis?.

Members will note that any consideration and decision taken by Members on the options outlined within this paper will clearly be driven by the position taken by Members in respect to the anticipated future role of the City Hall.

The recommendations set out within this paper seek to build upon the good practice which has been developed to date in relation to the City Hall and the close working relationships that already exist regarding the management of City Hall issues.

It should be noted at this stage that this paper does not directly deal with the resource implications of these options or the 'back-end' changes that these might necessitate as these will depend on the final options chosen by Members. It would be the intention that this further work would be progressed urgently subsequent to the initial direction given by Members.

## **ISSUE 2: Criteria for booking functions**

### ***Current situation***

The criteria for the use of the City Hall were last substantially reviewed in 2003 when it was agreed that they should primarily be based on the ability of the event organisers to demonstrate that an event to be held in the City Hall contributes in a substantial way to the achievement of one or more of the Council's objectives. This was agreed as the fairest way of ensuring equitable access to the many and varied groups and organisations which contribute to the life of the city as the Council's objectives are determined and reviewed after consultation with the people of Belfast and as such, the Council's objectives reflect those issues which are important to the citizens of the city.

Members are asked to note that the criteria have been subject to a number of minor reviews since 2003 to reflect the changes in the Council's objectives etc with the most recent changes being in August 2009 to reflect the Council's current strategic themes.

It was also agreed in 2003 that requests for the use of the City Hall must be made a minimum of three months in advance through a common application form. This is currently processed through Democratic Services. It was also agreed at this time that specific invitations involving third parties would require the advance authority of the Policy & Resources Committee. Members will be aware there is delegated authority for the Lord Mayor/Deputy Lord Mayor and the High Sheriff to select four charities which are given use of the City Hall throughout the year to organise charitable events during the respective mayoral and calendar years.

When agreeing the current criteria in 2003 the Committee also agreed a set of exclusions whereby the Committee would not agree to the use of the City Hall including political events by individual political parties; events of a commercial nature, applications from individuals (unless it was clear that this was for events being organised on behalf of some organisations or sections of people in the city), book launches (unless there was a close association with the Council), for large scale events which were likely to place an onerous requirement on the use of the building or for conference use.

As highlighted above, an important element of the process of booking rooms is the requirement for judgement to be exercised in terms of political sensitivity and granting authority only to those events which are appropriate for the Council. The criteria for the use of the City Hall are therefore crucial and it is important that these are kept under review to ensure that they meet the aims and objectives of the Council. Members are aware the Council is currently in the process of developing its new Corporate Plan for the 2011-2015 period and the Council's new objectives and priorities will need to be reflected in the criteria.

## **Recommendations**

It is recommended that -

1. The criteria for the use of City Hall be reviewed and revised to take account of the Council's new corporate objectives in the new Corporate Plan (when agreed) and Members' aspirations for the future use of City Hall. Members are asked to note that these changes will need to be reflected in the accompanying application form for the use of the City Hall
2. Members are asked to consider whether they would wish to retain the current scheme of delegation or extend the delegated authority for the granting of external events in the City Hall to the Director of Property & Projects, except in those circumstances whereby an event is deemed to be contentious. This approach will help streamline the process for booking and avoid unnecessary business being brought to Committee for consideration. It is also important to note that the overwhelming majority of decisions taken by Committee in regards to the use of the City Hall are passed unanimously.

## **ISSUE 3: Booking of events in the function rooms in the City Hall**

As highlighted above, the City Hall has 3 main function areas - the Reception Room, the Banqueting Hall and the Great Hall. The Rotunda area is also used for larger events. The vast majority of applications for the use of the City Hall relate to these rooms. These rooms typically generate over 600 function bookings per year (both external & internal), attracting over 30,000 guests. They are used for a wide variety of functions ranging from formal dinners to launch events and awards ceremonies. There are a number of inter-related issues which need to be considered in respect to the future use of these function rooms e.g. process for booking of the rooms, criteria for their use, the potential to introduce charges for the hiring of the function rooms and catering. These issues are examined in greater detail in the following sections.

### ***Current position***

The City Hall can be booked for both external functions as well as internally by departments and services for functions. This section outlines the current arrangements in place for the booking of function rooms within the City Hall and sets out, for Members consideration, proposals to further enhance the processes in place. Members are asked to note that the reference to 'booking' of rooms refers to the seeking and administering of the necessary authority to use rooms as well as the actual process of booking the rooms.

### ***Booking and Management of External Functions within the City Hall***

As outlined above there is an established policy in place for the booking of external events within the City Hall. However the process is somewhat complex in that it involves liaison with 2 services within the Council for any single event. In essence, Democratic Services have responsibility for managing all enquiries and applications in respect of the use of the function rooms in the City Hall by external organisations while Facilities Management is responsible for all other aspects of the event. The current process is explained in greater detail below:-

- The first point of contact for all external organisations for the booking of events is through Democratic Services who do an initial test of the application against the agreed criteria
- An application form is completed by the external client and submitted to Democratic Services who on receipt check availability online. Facilities Management then have responsibility for entering the details of the event on the Artifax System
- A schedule of applications is compiled for consideration by the SP&R Committee. If

hospitality is requested then an estimate of the cost is included on the schedule

- Once agreed by the SP&R Committee, Democratic Services notifies Facilities Management and responsibility for all other issues in relation to the event transfers to them
- Facilities Management then meet with the event organisers and liaise internally with Security, Cleaning & Portering etc.

Although this process has worked well to date, Members may wish to consider, given the growing demands for use of the City Hall, if it would be beneficial if the process for the bookings of rooms was more streamlined with a single point of contact and accountability within one service. This would make the process more transparent, efficient and would minimise the level of risk to the Council. It is suggested that this should be within the Facilities Management Section (Civic HQ) in the Department of Property and Projects as the Director of this Department has responsibility for the day to day management of the City Hall.

Members will be aware that a key component in the booking process of rooms by external organisations has been the requirement for judgement to be exercised in terms of political sensitivity and what is appropriate for the Council. It will be essential that if the process for booking rooms is streamlined within the Facilities Management Section that this element of judgement is retained. There is already a close working relationship between Facilities Management and Democratic Services and this link would need to be retained.

### ***Booking and management of internal events***

The formal process for the booking of internal events is that all such events should only be booked through the Civic HQ Section in the Council. However, this process is not routinely or uniformly applied with departments and services sometimes booking events/rooms themselves, in some cases without prior consultation with the Civic HQ team. In many instances approval is sought from relevant Standing Committees without reference to the role of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee. This is outside of the policy that was agreed by the Policy & Resources Committee in 2003 which states that *'If endorsement for an event is sought from a relevant Committee, it must also be submitted to Policy and Resources Committee in the same month. Final decision as to whether approval for use of the City Hall as an event venue is granted by Policy and Resources Committee'*

The Director of Property & Projects (formerly the Director of Corporate services) has delegated authority for the granting of internal events organised by council departments, including event launches, seminars etc. This was agreed in 2003 and was designed to ensure that the Committee's time was not wasted in considering routine and non-controversial applications, particularly in respect of Council organised events.

It is important that Council departments and indeed other Committees in the Council are clear about the correct procedures for obtaining permission for the booking of internal events in the City Hall and it is therefore recommended that the policy for the booking of internal functions is reinforced internally to Departments and Services.

### ***Best practice elsewhere***

Best practice research has indicated that all those Councils contacted as part of this review process (see Annex 1 for further details), have a single point of contact for the booking of functions and events in their Civic Building and that the single point is normally either through their Civic Headquarters Team or their Lord Mayor's office.

## Options

Set out below, for Members consideration, are a number of options in respect to the future booking of rooms for functions and events. Notwithstanding the option chosen, it is imperative that it is applied for both external and internal bookings. There needs to be a single integrated process for all functions, regardless of the booking organisation

	<b>Options</b>	<b>Points to note/consider</b>
1	Maintain the current policy for the booking of external events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (+) Members have confidence in the current system for the booking of events by external organisations and have been happy with how this is managed</li> <li>▪ (+) The overwhelming majority of decisions re the use of the City Hall by external groups are passed unanimously by the Strategic P&amp;R Committee</li> <li>▪ (-) No central point of accountability or contact which makes the process inefficient and poses a risk to the Council</li> <li>▪ (-) Current process creates additional administration</li> </ul>
2	Centralise the booking of <b>all</b> (both external and internal) events within a single section (suggested within the Civic HQ – Facilities Management Section)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (+) The Director of Property and Projects has responsibility for the day to day management of the City Hall and the centralising of the booking process within this Department would create a single point of contact and accountability</li> <li>▪ (+) Would minimise the risks to the Council of events/rooms being double-booked as there will be only one point of contact</li> <li>▪ (+) Would streamline the booking process and ensure co-ordination with the inter-related areas of security, portering, cleaning etc. - also managed by Facilities Management</li> </ul>

## Recommendations

It is recommended:

- that although the existing process for the booking of rooms by external organisations has worked well to date, it predates the Council's current organisational structure and currently means that an event organiser has to liaise with two services in relation to a single event. It is therefore recommended that

the process is centralised within the Civic HQ Section in the Department of Property & Projects as this Department has responsibility for the day to day management of the City Hall. This would create a unified booking process, both operationally and administratively, which would help make it more efficient and transparent

- that if Members consider whether the process for booking rooms by external organisations should be centralised within the Civic HQ Section in the Department of Property & Projects as this Department has responsibility for the day to day management of the City Hall. This would create a unified booking process, both operationally and administratively;
- should Members agree to a streamlined and centralised process, that a Reference Panel be established to oversee the use and management of the City Hall including the booking process for events. This Panel will assess applications; ensuring challenge and accountability; and reporting to Committee as necessary. It is suggested that the Reference Panel would be chaired by the Director of Property & Projects and would have representatives from Democratic and Legal Services, the Chief Executive's Department, Good Relations and Facilities Management. The proposed Terms of Reference for this Panel will be brought back to Committee.
- Members will appreciate that there is a crucial element of judgement involved with the booking of rooms by external organisations. It is therefore important that the existing close liaison with the Democratic Services Section remains an integral and intrinsic part of the consideration process and the proposed Reference Panel. It would be the intention that the role of the Reference Panel would be kept under review.

## **ISSUE 4 - Policy for Charging for Functions Rooms in the City Hall**

### ***Current position***

As highlighted above the Council is currently holding upwards of 600 events per year in the City Hall through a mixture of internal and external events. The City Hall operates on a non-commercial basis which means that there is currently no practice of for the charging of room hire of the City Hall's main function areas. Members are however asked to note that the typical cost for servicing the larger out of hours functions was nearly **£70,000** in 2009/2010 and that this cost is borne by the rate-payer in addition to providing free function rooms.

As outlined in the opening paragraphs of this paper the issue of potentially introducing charges for the hiring of the City Hall's function rooms by external organisations fundamentally raises the issue of '*what is/should be*' the role of the City Hall and Members are asked to keep this in mind when considering this section.

Members may be aware that there was a historic policy for charging which was agreed by the previous Policy & Resources Committee in 1993 which agreed that two standard charges should be applied, irrespective of the areas of the building used in hosting the function:



- £650 for an evening event at which there is no dancing
- £1,250 for an evening event at which there is dancing.

These charges were to be levied to cover the out-of pocket expenses incurred by the Council – including a notional fee in respect of the cost of heating, lighting, the use of kitchen equipment and staffing in terms of security, cleaning and supervision. Members are asked to note however it was estimated that this charge would only apply to about 5% of evening functions. This policy appears to have fallen into abeyance and this charge is not currently levied on any events.

The issue of charging for external events was also discussed and agreed by the Policy & Resources Committee when the criteria for use of the City Hall were last substantially revised in 2003. At this time the Committee agreed that –

- *An appropriate scale of charges, which reflects set-up and break-down times, security, cleaning, administration and supervisory costs be drawn up to cover the use of the building by all governmental or similar organisations which are granted the necessary permission. Within the scale of fees, exemptions would be made in respect of council departments, community, charitable or voluntary groups or organisations.*

At this time it was agreed that a “A subsequent report in this regard will be submitted to the Committee in due course”. Members are asked to note however this report was never submitted and as such the scale of charges was never introduced.

### **Best practice elsewhere**

Best practice research has indicated that all other Councils who were contacted during the course of this research charge for room hire. An overview of these charges is presented at Annex 1 for the information of Members. The majority of local authorities have introduced a sliding scale of charges depending on the type of organisation booking the event.

### **Proposed options**

There are a number of options available in relation to the charging for the hire of function rooms within the City Hall. These are outlined below for Members attention together with some points to note in relation to each option:-

	<b>Options</b>	<b>Points to note/consider (Pros and cons)</b>
1	Maintain the current policy of not charging for room hire within the City Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (+) City Hall is the key civic building in the city – keeping it free allows groups who might not otherwise be able to access the City Hall the opportunity to use it</li> <li>▪ (-) the Council is losing out on a key revenue stream by not charging for room hire in what is the city’s most prestigious building – other local authorities across the UK and Ireland are capitalising</li> </ul>

		<p>on this revenue stream e.g. Oxford Town Hall raises over £400,000 per annum through room hire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (-) criticism from the commercial sector – providing free access to the city’s key building can be seen to be unfairly depriving local businesses of commercial opportunities at this time of financial uncertainty</li> </ul>
2	Reinstate the policy previously agreed by Committee in 1993 for the charging of function rooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (+) potentially positive revenue stream for the Council – however this may be offset by any additional resources which are required</li> <li>▪ (-) these charges were agreed in 1993 and may no longer be competitive</li> <li>▪ (-) it was estimated at this time that these charges would only apply to about 5% of evening events</li> <li>▪ (-) absence of clear criteria to define when these charges should apply</li> </ul>
3	Examine the potential for charging for room hire for all external organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (?) this fundamentally raises the question of what is the role of the council – is it to be commercial?</li> <li>▪ (+) There are a number of charging options are potentially available - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Cost recovery</i> - the charges applied could be sufficient to ensure that the Council’s costs are covered</li> <li>- <i>‘Not for profit, not for loss’ scenario- with subsidised rates for charity/voluntary groups</i> – groups who can clearly demonstrate that they are voluntary, community groups, charities etc would benefit from a subsidised rate – with the Council deciding what levels of subsidy/discount it wishes to apply to specific categories</li> <li>- <i>Commercial approach</i> – that all non-civic events are charged a commercial room hire rate</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ (+) potentially positive revenue stream for the Council – however this may be off set or eroded by any additional resources which are required</li> <li>▪ (+) would help negate the criticism which has been received in from the private sector that the Council is</li> <li>▪ (-) charging may raise customer expectations for standards to be delivered and this may require additional resources to deliver the standards expected</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (-) Places the Council in competition with its other civic buildings (Waterfront &amp; Ulster Hall/Malone House and Belfast Castle) and with other local hotels and conference centres</li> </ul>
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In evaluating these options Members are also reminded that there are some constraints on the use of the City Hall including –

- there is a danger that the ‘prestige’ which the use of the City Hall brings may be diminished or diluted by over use
- the City Hall is a ‘working’ building and the needs of the Members and staff need to be taken into consideration
- additional events will place considerably more pressure on the existing facilities and staff – e.g. toilet facilities
- it is a listed building and is over 100 years old and the historic nature of the building means that it does not necessarily have some of the requirements that event organisers need – e.g. changing facilities for entertainers etc
- the function rooms and the kitchen are on the first floor which create extra difficulties over access, deliveries etc

## Recommendations

It is recommended that Members -

- consider revising the policy for charging for functions at the City Hall where there is a commercial interest with further information to be brought back to Committee on an appropriate scale of charges including a ‘*not for profit, not for loss*’ scenario in line with best practice
- note that this decision needs to be considered in the context of the role of the City Hall and the constraints on the use of the building highlighted in the report.
- note the previous Committee decisions in 1993 and 2003 which related to agreeing to charge external organisations for room hire

## ISSUE 5: Catering for City Hall Events

### ***Current position***

The Council’s main function areas are serviced by an adjoining kitchen facility. Catering is currently provided either in-house by the Council’s own catering team or externally by a number of other caterers. However there are no explicit policies and procedures in place for the catering of events and in the past there have been a number of issues which have arisen with external caterers and the condition that the kitchens have been left in after events etc. As Members are aware at present the Council does not generate any revenue from the catering of functions.

It is important to note that where internal function organisers are using external catering providers during times when the in-house team is available to do the work (i.e. during working hours), the financial effect of using external caterer will be an additional cost to the council

## **Best practice elsewhere**

Best practice research has indicated that all other Councils who were contacted during the course of this research nearly all either provided catering in-house or had an exclusive contract with one caterer for the provision of all catering services (please see annex 1). Sometimes this was an arms length company of the Council. A minority of Councils had no specific catering arrangements in place and allowed caterers to be brought in on a function by function basis.

## **Options**

There are a number of options available in relation to the catering for functions within the City Hall. These are outlined for Members attention below together with some points to note in relation to each option as set out overleaf.

	<b>Options</b>	<b>Points to note/consider (Pros and cons)</b>
1	Bring all catering in house or give internal caterers first refusal on all catering events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (-) Capacity of the Council's current small catering team to deliver large scale events (External options to only be examined if the scale/scope of the event is beyond that which the in-house team can deliver)</li> <li>▪ (-) Resource implications</li> <li>▪ (+) Potential revenue stream for council</li> <li>▪ (+) consistency in approach</li> </ul>
2	Have a select 'call-off' list of a small numbers of caterers appointed through a competitive tendering process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (+) provides an element of choice to event organisers</li> <li>▪ (+) provides opportunities to a range of businesses</li> <li>▪ (-) Confusion over specific roles and responsibilities – e.g. condition of kitchens after events</li> </ul>
3	Appoint a single caterer for all events within the City Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (+) potential revenue stream</li> <li>▪ (+) single point of accountability for all catering functions</li> <li>▪ (+) common practice approach in other local authorities</li> <li>▪ (-) potential issues that might arise with only having a single deliverer – quality, lack of competition etc. Members will be aware that this arrangement was adopted previously and was dispensed with for a number of reasons including quality and lack of competition. However this should not preclude this option being examined again</li> </ul>

## Recommendations

- It is recommended that Members agree to further exploration be given to the viability of each of the options outlined.

## ISSUE 6: Tours

As highlighted the City Hall is one of Belfast's key tourist attractions and is now a routine 'must see' destination for visitors to the city.

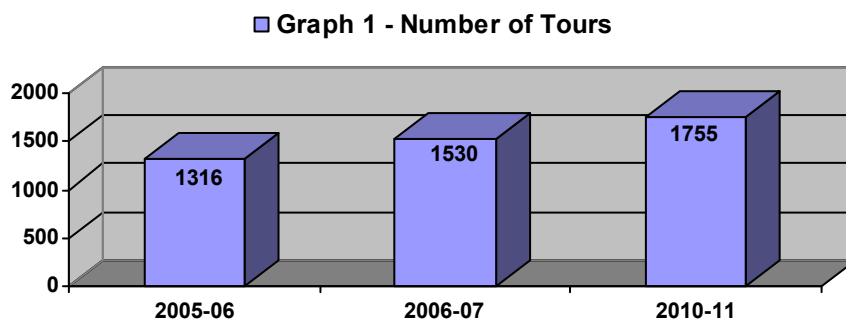
### *Current position*

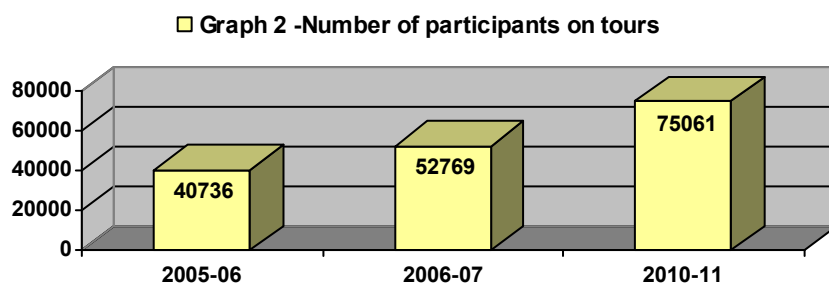
Public tours of the City Hall are currently available Monday to Friday at 11am, 2pm and 3pm and on a Saturday at 2pm and 3pm. There are no tours on a Sunday, bank holidays or public holidays. Tours are available on a first-come, first-served basis (no booking needed) and leave from the reception area inside Belfast City Hall. Private tours are also available by pre arrangement with the Civic Headquarters Unit in the Council. It should be noted that there is currently no charge for either the public tours or the private pre-booked tours.

Since the reopening of the City Hall there has been a substantial increase both in the number of tours conducted and the number of participants on tours. This is shown on the graphs below. It should be highlighted that these graphs compare the last 2 complete years of tour data (2005/6 and 2006/7 - which show a 30% increase in participants even then) and the figures up to end December of 2010 which have then been extrapolated until year-end (i.e. we've divided by 4 and multiplied by 12). This gives a further increase of 60% over 2006/7.

As can be seen from these graphs, the number of tours has increased by **14.7%** (up from 1,530 to 1,755) while the number of participants has increased by **42%** (up from 52,769 to 75,061), so not only are there more tours but the number of participants per tour has increased faster. Average tour attendance is now 48.

Graph 1 and 2 - Number of tours and number of participants on tours of the City Hall





At present there are two full time tour guides employed by the Council – these are supplemented by 5 casual tour guides. The tour guides are currently stretched to capacity due to the volume of tours and the numbers of participants and it has also proven difficult at times for the casual tour guides to cover tours due to other commitments.

The total cost (on present trends) of providing the tour cover with the Council’s own in-house tour guides is £43,317 (incl. all on-costs and O/T etc) and a further £19,755 in respect of casual cover (5 casual tour guides), making a total cost to the council of **£63,072**.

### **Best practice elsewhere**

Best practice research has indicated that the majority of tours of major civic buildings elsewhere across the UK and in Ireland are provided free of charge by other local authorities/central government. An overview of best practice in relation to tours of other City/Town Halls or seats of Parliament is presented at annex 2 for the interest of Members.

It should also be noted that research conducted by the Council in 2006 highlighted that most people surveyed indicated that they would be unwilling to pay for a tour of the City Hall – which is an understandable response given that it is currently free of charge.

### **Proposed options**

There are a number of options available to Members in relation to the future provision of tours. These are outlined below along with some points to note to aide discussion.

	<b>Options</b>	<b>Points to note/consider</b>
1	Maintain the current policy of not charging for either public or private tours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (+) In line with best practice</li> <li>▪ (-) Council costs in putting on tours not covered</li> <li>▪ (-) Increasing number of tours – both public and pre-booked could lead to resource implications – tour guides are being over-stretched and this could lead to tours not being able to be taken</li> </ul>
2	Introduce a charge for all tour participants on both public and private tours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (+) Depending on the charge levied this could potentially cover the Council’s costs in putting on tours</li> <li>▪ (-) Potential negative impact on the number of people visiting the City Hall if a charge was introduced</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (-) Additional administration burden taken up in the pre tour stages – i.e. who would collect the money and where? Could potentially lead to further congestion in the Rotunda area when people are queuing up to pay</li> <li>▪ (-) Raises customer expectations - potential for negative criticism/complaints if tour participants are not able to see all the rooms in the City Hall if these are otherwise booked</li> <li>▪ (/) Further consideration would need to be given to the appropriate level of charging/level of concessions?</li> </ul>
3	<p>Introduce a charge for private pre-booked tours</p> <p>This charge would be levied on pre-booked tours organised through a tour operator and the charge would be levied on the tour operator and not the individual tourist</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (+) Could help cover the Council's costs in putting on tours</li> <li>▪ (+) Charges could be levied on tour operators in advance when tours are booked and therefore would be easier to administer and would not lead to congestion etc before tours</li> <li>▪ (-) Potential negative impact on the number of people visiting the City Hall if a charge is applied</li> <li>▪ (-) Raises customer expectations - potential for negative criticism/complaints if tour participants are not able to see all the rooms in the City Hall if these are otherwise booked</li> <li>▪ (-) Inconsistency of policy could potentially rise equality issues – i.e. charging some groups and not charging others (charity groups etc who pre book tours)</li> <li>▪ (/) Further consideration would need to be given to the appropriate level of charging</li> </ul>
4	<p>Keep all tours free of charge but install a donation/tip box where tour participants will be free to decide if they wish to donate or not</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (+) Reduced administration burden</li> <li>▪ (+) Potential income stream for the council which could be offset against costs or used for alternative reasons (as agreed by Members) e.g. put towards the Lord Mayor's charity which could generate positive PR, investment in minor refurbishment works in City Hall etc.</li> <li>▪ Could be piloted for a short period to determine receptiveness to approach</li> <li>▪ Best practice approach which has been used elsewhere – e.g. Ulster Museum</li> </ul>

## **Recommendations**

It is recommended that -

- that Members consider further the options presented above in relation to the provision of tours in the City Hall and consider whether tours should remain free of charge in line with current practice or if a charge for tours should be levied. If a decision was taken to introduce a charge further work would then need to be carried out to establish an appropriate level of charging
- Members are asked to note that a combination of options could also be introduced if they consider this to be more appropriate
- Members are asked to note that the final option chosen could have some resource implications and these would need to be considered in greater detail once the options have been further explored.

## **ISSUE 7: City Hall Grounds**

### ***Current position***

The City Hall grounds are a key asset being the only green, open space within the city centre. They act as a key meeting area, relaxation area and a focal point for people in the city. The City Hall grounds are a key location for the holding of events and within the past year 144 events have been held in the City Hall grounds including the annual Christmas Continental Market which takes place in December and also filming opportunities. It should be noted that at present no charges are levied in relation to events held in the City Hall grounds (with the exception of the Continental Market). A wide range of events are also planned for the City Hall Grounds during 2011 & 2012 in the run up to the Olympics and the Titanic centenary.

### ***Criteria for the use of the City Hall Grounds.***

The City Hall grounds are subject to Bye-Laws which were introduced in 1997 to protect and maintain the facility and to ensure the safety of users. The following principles govern the use of the grounds:

- to be used for passive recreation purposes at all times
- not to be used for fireworks displays
- no items/materials (banners, posters, bicycles, etc.) to be permitted to be attached to the gates and railings of the City Hall
- access gates shall be kept open until 5.30pm
- dogs, with the exception of Guide Dogs, to be prohibited from using the City Hall Grounds except when on a leash
- an area in the south-west corner of the grounds to be set aside for use by Guide Dogs only



There are growing demands on the use of the City Hall grounds and this is an area which has not been substantially reviewed for a long time. It is therefore recommended that the criteria for the use of the City Hall grounds are substantially reviewed in light of the Council’s corporate objectives and the decisions on the future role of the City Hall.

**Recommendations**

It is recommended that -

- that Members consider whether the criteria for the use of the City Hall grounds be reviewed and updated in line with the proposed review of the criteria for the use of the City Hall Building.

**Accountability and decision making re the use of the City Hall Grounds**

The process re the use of the City Hall grounds is currently vague and this understandably has sometimes lead to confusion over who is responsible for the booking of events, what the process is for the booking of events and what events can be held. It should be noted that the Director of Property & Projects Requests has delegated authority for the use of the City Hall grounds. It is therefore recommended that **all** future requests for use of the grounds of the City Hall should be submitted through the Director of Property & Projects. This will include both internal and external requests for the use of the grounds. If this is agreed, it will be important that this process is clearly communicated and reinforced internally and externally.

**Charging for the use of City Hall Grounds**

There are a number of options available in relation to the use of the City Hall grounds. These are outlined for Members attention below together with some points to note -

<i>Options</i>		
	<b>Options</b>	<b>Points to note/consider (Pros and cons)</b>
1	Maintain the current policy of allowing free hire of City Hall grounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (+) Encourages greater usage and footfall within the City Hall and its grounds</li> <li>▪ (+) Enhances the vitality of the City Hall</li> <li>▪ (-) No income received</li> </ul>
2	Examine the potential for charging for hiring the City Hal grounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (+) potential positive revenue stream for the Council</li> <li>▪ (+) charges are applied for events etc. in the Council’s other parks and open spaces and this would bring a consistency of approach</li> <li>▪ (-) additional administration required</li> </ul>

## Recommendations

It is recommended that Members consider whether:

### *Criteria for the use of the City Hall Grounds*

1. criteria for the use of the City Hall grounds should be reviewed and updated in line with the proposed review of the criteria for the use of the City Hall Building.
2. **all** future requests (to be completed via an enhanced application form) for use of the grounds of the City Hall should be submitted through the Director of Property & Projects who has delegated authority in this regard. This includes both internal and external requests for the use of the grounds. The Director of Property & Projects will continue to report regularly to Committee on events
3. the Standing Orders are clarified to ensure that is explicit that the management of the City Hall Grounds is the responsibility of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee through the Director of Property & Projects – this will help to remove any ambiguity and ensure that decisions re the use of the grounds are brought to the SP&R committee. This will also help to ensure co-ordination between events in the grounds of the City hall and within the Hall itself and ensure that are events are co-ordinated and minimise the risk to the Council of events being double-booked etc

### *Charging*

4. That Members consider whether a charging policy should be introduced for the use of City Hall Grounds for events, possibly in line with the charges that are applied for events in the Council's parks and open spaces; or whether they wish to maintain the current policy of allowing free use of the grounds.

## Summary and overall recommendations

Members will note that this is a complex piece of work. The Committee is asked to note the information in this report and to consider the following:-

1. that the options set out above for Members consideration and direction should be considered within the context of the fundamental issue of **'What is the role of the City Hall?'**
2. consider the options and recommendations presented in relation to –
  - criteria for the use of the City Hall
  - scope to introduce a policy for charging for function room hire in the City Hall
  - process for booking and management of events in the City Hall
  - catering for events
  - City Hall Tours
  - City Hall grounds – criteria for use, accountability and decision making process and potential scope to introduce charging for events in the grounds
3. that a single reference group be established to oversee the use and management of the City Hall – this Group would be responsible for discussing events both inside and outside the building, tours, and general management issues and memorabilia. This would ensure that a co-ordinated and integrated approach is applied. It is recommended that the Reference Panel would be chaired by the Director of Property and Projects and would have representatives from Democratic and Legal Services, the Chief Executive's Department, Good Relations and Facilities Management.

4. Once Members have considered and agreed the way forward for the future use and management of the City Hall including functions, catering, tours and the use of the grounds, a set of Guidelines should be produced which outlines the policies and procedures for the booking of all events. This could be produced by the Council's in house Graphic Design Team minimising costs and can be placed on the Council's website ensuring that the whole process is open and transparent

## Annex 1: Events and functions - BEST PRACTICE ELSEWHERE

Venue (Council – where applicable)	Working building	Charges applied for room hire	Charging and Venue Details	Catering arrangements	Decision making process																								
OTHER COUNCILS T																													
Birmingham Council House (Birmingham City Council)	YES	YES	<p>The facilities in the Council House are available for use by external organisations in connection with the promotion of Birmingham, annual dinners and functions in support of charities</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Room</th> <th></th> <th></th> <th>Capacity</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Banqueting Suite (no minimum catering spend)</td> <td>Mon-Fri £200 per hr (min 4hrs)</td> <td>Sat £250 per hr (min 4 hr) Sun £300 per hr (min 4 hr)</td> <td>Up to 450</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Banqueting Suite (£1000 minimum catering spend)</td> <td>Mon-Fri £130 per hr (min 4hrs)</td> <td>Sat &amp; Sun £150 per hr (min 4 hr)</td> <td>Up to 450</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Chamberlain Room</td> <td>Mon-Fri Up to 4 hrs - £85 Up to 8hrs - £160</td> <td>Sat &amp; Sun £275.00</td> <td>Up to 45</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Room			Capacity	Banqueting Suite (no minimum catering spend)	Mon-Fri £200 per hr (min 4hrs)	Sat £250 per hr (min 4 hr) Sun £300 per hr (min 4 hr)	Up to 450	Banqueting Suite (£1000 minimum catering spend)	Mon-Fri £130 per hr (min 4hrs)	Sat & Sun £150 per hr (min 4 hr)	Up to 450	Chamberlain Room	Mon-Fri Up to 4 hrs - £85 Up to 8hrs - £160	Sat & Sun £275.00	Up to 45	All catering is provided by Birmingham City Council's Civic Catering Team	Contact re booking is made through the Venue Assistants								
Room			Capacity																										
Banqueting Suite (no minimum catering spend)	Mon-Fri £200 per hr (min 4hrs)	Sat £250 per hr (min 4 hr) Sun £300 per hr (min 4 hr)	Up to 450																										
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Liverpool City Hall (Liverpool City Council)	YES	YES	<p>Mixture of charging rates – external/commercial rate and an internal/charity rate. Rates for key rooms for 2010/11 are set out below</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Room</th> <th>External Rate</th> <th>Internal/ Charity rate</th> <th>Capacity</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Main Ballroom (Evening)</td> <td>£3,100</td> <td>£2,600</td> <td>270 (theatre)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Main Ballroom (Day)</td> <td>£2,100</td> <td>£1,750</td> <td>210 (cabaret)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Small Ballroom (Night)</td> <td>£1,500</td> <td>£1,250</td> <td>130 (theatre)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Small Ballroom (Day)</td> <td>£1,200</td> <td>£950</td> <td>80 (cabaret) 40 (boardroom)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Reception Room (Night)</td> <td>£800</td> <td>£550</td> <td>60 (theatre)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Room	External Rate	Internal/ Charity rate	Capacity	Main Ballroom (Evening)	£3,100	£2,600	270 (theatre)	Main Ballroom (Day)	£2,100	£1,750	210 (cabaret)	Small Ballroom (Night)	£1,500	£1,250	130 (theatre)	Small Ballroom (Day)	£1,200	£950	80 (cabaret) 40 (boardroom)	Reception Room (Night)	£800	£550	60 (theatre)	All catering is done by the in-house team	All decisions on use are taken by officers
Room	External Rate	Internal/ Charity rate	Capacity																										
Main Ballroom (Evening)	£3,100	£2,600	270 (theatre)																										
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Venue (Council – where applicable)	Working building	Charges applied for room hire	Charging and Venue Details				Catering arrangements	Decision making process
			Reception Room (Day)	£550	£400	40 (cabaret) 25 (boardroom)		
			Beavan/Gladstone (Day)	£350	£300	40 (theatre) 16 (boardroom)		
			Council Chamber (per hr)	£150	N/A			
			Ground Floor & 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor (Day & Evening)	£4000	£3,200			
			Ground Floor & 1 <sup>st</sup> Floor (Day)	£3,100	£3,200			
Cheltenham Town Hall	?	YES	Room	Capacity	Cost			
			Main Hall	1000	Min £190 per hr or £2600 all day Max £440 per hr or £3600 all day Min charge of 3 hrs. Also charge by hr for time spent by organiser setting up & breaking down			
			Pillar Room	300	Min £80 per hr or £510 all day Max £125 per hr or £625 all day Prices inc vat			
			Drawing Room	180	Min £65 per hr or £395 all day Max £115 per hr or £510 all day Prices inc vat			
City Hall London (Greater London Authority)	YES	YES	Room hire rates for London's Living Room –					
			Mon – Fri:	4hrs (daytime) 8am – 5.30pm 6pm – 10.30pm	£2,717 £5,217 £5,897			
			Saturday		up to £6,457			
			Sunday		up to £6,697			
			Registered charities benefit from reduced rates.					
Edinburgh City Chambers (Edinburgh City Council)	YES	YES	Scale of charges for key rooms is set out below					
			EXTERNAL RATES					
				Mon –Fri (Day)	Mon- Thurs PM	Fri & weekends	Sat/Sun Weekend	
			Type of Rate	Hourly	Full Day	Min. 4hr	Min. 4hr	Day Rate
							All catering is done by the in-house caterers who also provide the catering for the Council's restaurants	All decisions on room bookings are taken by Council staff under

Venue (Council – where applicable)	Working building	Charges applied for room hire	Charging and Venue Details					Catering arrangements	Decision making process		
			Council Chamber	£114	£820	£681	£912	£1641		delegated authority	
			European Room	£108	£777	£648	£864	£1555			
			Councillors' Lounge	n/a	n/a	£316	£422	£760			
			Dunedin Room	£52	£380	£316	£422	£760			
			Old Council Chamber	£52	£380	£316	£422	£760			
			Mandela Room	£52	£380	£316	£422	£760			
			Executive Dining Room	£27	£199	£163	£220	£398			
			Dean of Guild Court Room	£52	£380	£316	£422	£760			
			Dean of Guild Waiting Room	£27	£199	£163	£220	£398			
			SUBSIDISED RATES								
				Mon –Fri (Day)		Mon- Thurs PM	Fri & weekends	Sat/Sun Weekend			
			Type of Rate	Hourly	Full Day	Min. 4hr	Min. 4hr	Day Rate			
			Council Chamber	£50	£364	£303	£404	£728			
			European Room	£48	£348	£290	£387	£697			
			Councillors' Lounge	n/a	n/a	£198	£264	£475			
			Dunedin Room	£33	£237	£198	£264	£475			
			Old Council Chamber	£33	£237	£198	£264	£475			
			Mandela Room	£33	£237	£198	£264	£475			
			Executive Dining Room	n/a	n/a	£110	£149	£268			
			Dean of Guild Court Room	£33	£237	£198	£264	£475			
			Dean of Guild Waiting Room	£18	£134	£110	£149	£268			
			WEEKEND RATES – FULL DAY (8.30AM – 1.00AM)								
			Day	Saturday		Sunday (Sat rate incl. 10% surcharge)					
			Use of all rooms • Council Chamber								

Venue (Council – where applicable)	Working building	Charges applied for room hire	Charging and Venue Details			Catering arrangements	Decision making process
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• European Room</li> <li>• Councillors’ Lounge</li> <li>• Dunedin Room</li> <li>• Old Council Chamber</li> </ul>	£2184	£2402		
			All internal bookings have to come through the Events Team				
Glasgow City Chambers (Glasgow City Council)	YES	Depends No charges Mon-Fri during the day Evening and weekend events are charged based on the number of staff needed	<p>Glasgow City Council’s current policy for allowing the use of the City Chambers falls under 3 headings -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lord Provosts Hospitality- However if an organisation has been granted a civic reception and wish to hold a dinner afterwards then this would be granted as the accommodation is already use and cannot be used by anyone else. The organisation would be charged for the staffing cost and a facility charge.</li> <li>• Council Events</li> <li>• Charities – Registered Charities are allowed the use of the accommodation once per calendar year for fundraising purposes only. Additionally all funds raised must go to benefit the citizens of Glasgow or Scotland</li> </ul> <p>If events do not fit under these three heading permission is not granted – they can use other council buildings if they wish</p> <p>In regards to charges there are no charges for use of the accommodation during working hours Mon to Fri. All evening and weekend events are charge based on the number of staff required for the event. This charge would be their hourly rate at the appropriate overtime rate (time and half or double time). In addition to this we would add a charge for the heating, lighting and use of facilities. These costs would be separate from catering costs the event incurred.</p> <p>All Council Departments will have to go through the same process as an external organisation.</p>			Single point of catering - All catering within the City Chambers is carried out by Cordia who have the sole concession for catering and the provision of bars within the City Chambers. Cordia are ALEO (Arms Length External Organisation) of Glasgow City Council	Decisions on whether an organisation is allowed use of the City Chambers is carried out by the City Chambers Manager under delegated authority from the Chief Executive
Dublin City Hall (Dublin City Council)	YES	YES	<p>Charges</p> <p>€4,000 (€3,305.79 net plus €694.21 VAT at 21%) per night for dinner or drinks reception over 2 1/2 hours.</p> <p>€2,500 (€2,066.12 net plus €433.88 VAT at 21%) per night for drinks reception up to 2 1/2 hours.</p> <p>Any event that goes over the specified time will be charged accordingly.</p> <p>The Exhibition area is also available for smaller receptions, (100 max), priced on request.</p> <p>A booking deposit of €750 (€619.83 net plus €130.17 VAT at 21%) must accompany completed booking form, and must be paid in advance of function. Upon receipt of the deposit the booking will be confirmed. This deposit is non-refundable. Following the event it is deducted from the hire fee provided the facilities are left in a</p>			Dublin City Hall does not have a specific catering company that a client is required to use – a list of caterers is available upon request from the Council	

Venue (Council – where applicable)	Working building	Charges applied for room hire	Charging and Venue Details			Catering arrangements	Decision making process
			satisfactory condition.				
OTHER VENUES INCLUDING OTHER COUNCIL FACILITIES/COMMERCIAL VENUES ETC							
Waterfront Hall (Belfast City Council)	NO	YES	Room	Capacity	Rates		
			Studio	380	Full day (09.00-23.00) - £1,399 ex vat Part day (8hrs) - £1,222 ex vat		
			Bar 1	150	Full day (09.00-23.00) - £841 ex vat Part day (8hrs) - £666 – ex vat		
			Bar 2	250	Full day (09.00-23.00) - £1,190 – ex vat Part day (8hrs) - £1,017 – ex vat		
Guildhall (Derry City Council)	YES	YES	£60 per hour ex vat				
Queen’s University	YES	YES	Room	Capacity	Rates		
			Sir William Whitla Hall	1250	Half day (4hrs) Mon-Fri - £1,000 Full day Mon-Fri - £1,500 Full day Sat-Sun - £2,000 Room hire if catering taken - £500 Prices are being reviewed and ex vat		
			Great Hall	180	Half day (4hrs) Mon-Fri - £400 Full day Mon-Fri - £575 Full day Sat-Sun - £700 Room hire if catering taken - £200 Prices are being reviewed and ex vat		



## Annex 2: TOURS - BEST PRACTICE ELSEWHERE

Venue (Council – where applicable)	Working Building	Guided Tours	Charge applied	Notes
Sheffield Town Hall (Sheffield City Council)	YES	YES	NO	Public tours available between 10.00 and Noon and 2.00pm and 4.00pm. Tours last 45mins and should be pre booked Tours also available during the summer that do not need to be pre booked Tours are conducted by interested members of staff
Birmingham Council House (Birmingham City Council)		YES	NO	Tours must be pre-booked through the Council's Democratic Services Unit – tours last an 1hr to 1½
Liverpool City Hall (Liverpool City Council)	YES	YES	NO	General public tours are held once a month and must be booked in advance Other private tours can be arranged as necessary through the Lord Mayor's Office

				Liverpool City Council used to charge for tours but changed them to free a while ago
Manchester Town Hall (Manchester City Council)	YES	YES	YES £6 adult £5 concession	Tours must be booked in advance – currently held on a Wednesday and a Saturday however looking to increase the frequency of these from October. Tours take up to 1hr30mins and are provided by independent tour guide (not council staff)
Glasgow City Chambers (Glasgow City Council)		YES	NO	At least two tours per day – no need to pre book. Private pre booked tours are also available. Tours last approx 45mins
Oxford Town Hall (Oxford City Council)	YES	NO	N/A	Public tours not currently available however they are looking to start these later this year and are considering levying a charge for tours (£4adult /£3 concessions)
Mansion House, City of London		YES	YES - £6 adult £4 child Private pre arranged tours are free	City Guide Tours – each Tuesday at 2.00pm. Charge applied. Places cannot be booked in advance and are on a first come, first served basis. Max. number for the tour is 40. Tours are led by trained City of London Guides Groups Tours – pre bookable up to 3months in advance depending on the programme of events. Free of charge. Tour lasts an hour
Dublin City Hall (Dublin City Council)	YES	YES	No	Tours must be pre booked
Stormont (NI Assembly Buildings)	YES	YES	NO	Guided tours are available on weekdays from 10.00am to 4.00pm for invited guests of Members of officers of the NI Assembly. Tours may also take place from 4.00pm to 9.00pm Mon-Thurs and Sat (10.00am to 9.00pm) provided they are accompanied by hospitality Educational visits are also available
House of Commons (UK Parliament)	YES	YES	Tours arranged through MP/Lord – NO CHARGE But can pay for a tour during summer	UK Residents - Tours need to be arranged through an MP or a Lord. Tours generally have to be booked six months in advance and take about 75mins. UK visitors can also pay for a tour during the Summer Opening or on Saturdays from 3 <sup>rd</sup> July. Tickets can be purchased in advance through Ticketmaster or by queuing on the day Overseas visitors – Can only tour Parliament during the Summer Opening or on Saturday when paid for tickets can be purchased
Holyrood – Scottish Parliament	YES	YES	NO	Tours must be pre booked and normally take an hour
Senedd – Welsh Assembly	YES	YES	NO	Tours must be pre booked