



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Requests for use of exhibition space in East Entrance
Date:	19 th August 2011
Reporting Officer:	Gerry Millar, Director of Property & Projects
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Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that, on foot of a report approved by the Policy & Resources Committee on 18th August 2006, authority to approve routine requests for access to a number of areas within the City Hall was delegated to the then Director of Corporate Services. This delegated authority, which explicitly includes the East Entrance area, was subsequently transferred to the Director of Property & Projects in 2010.

A significant number of requests for use of this area are typically received by the council and, since 2006, most have been satisfactorily dealt with using the delegated authority provision, although certain proposed events which do not appear to meet the agreed criteria are occasionally brought to the Committee for consideration in the normal way.

However, at its meeting of 15th April 2011, the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee considered the issue of requests made specifically in relation to the use of the East Entrance for exhibitions and decided that ***“the Committee adopted the recommendation and agreed that, in future, any requests to hold exhibitions in the East Entrance be submitted in the first instance to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.”***

On foot of this decision, all requests for use of the East Entrance for exhibitions must now be presented to the Committee for approval. The following requests have been received in respect of exhibition usage in the East Entrance area, and the decision of the Committee in relation to each is therefore sought.

Re-unification of Italy – 150 year anniversary

A request has recently been received from the Northern Ireland branch of the Lucchesi nel Mondo Association to have an exhibition celebrating the 150th anniversary of the unification of Italy. The Lucchesi nel Mondo Association was founded in 1968 and there are now 85 branches throughout the world. The Northern Ireland branch was set up in Belfast on the 8th May 2005.

Its members consist of Italians who have settled in Northern Ireland and people from Northern Ireland who have an interest in Italy. The aim of the Association is to promote cultural links between Italy and other countries. The exhibition, which contains a mixture of photographs, images and script, has been prepared by the region of Tuscany and focuses on key events in Tuscany at the time of the reunification of Italy in 1861.

The exhibition is currently touring a number of European cities and the association members in Belfast are keen to have it in Belfast as it will help to promote the cultural links between the 2 countries and will also help when other Italian cultural events (e.g. the La Scala film theatre is being approached about coming to the city). This request has the support of the Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit, which sees it as a way of supporting the Italian community in Belfast and developing tourism and cultural links with that country. The exhibition consisting of 20 pop-up panels would be set up in the east entrance area of the City Hall and be in place from the 21st November to the 16th December 2011.

Belfast & Cork Maritime Painting Exhibition

A request has recently been received on behalf of the Belfast Harbour Commissioner and the Crawford Municipal Gallery in Cork to have a maritime themed painting exhibition in the City Hall for a 4-week period in April 2012. The exhibition would include a representative selection of paintings from the Port of Cork and the Belfast Harbour collections from the period 1700 – 2000. The paintings on display would be available for viewing purposes only and not for sale.

The collection would contain some paintings featuring the Titanic, and it is felt having the exhibition in the City Hall in April 2012 would link in with other planned Titanic 2012 events. Members may also be aware there is also a maritime link between Belfast and Cork as the port of Cobh (formally Queenstown) in Cork was the last port of call before the Titanic left to cross the Atlantic.

'Belfast Now' film exhibition

A request has recently been received from the DoubleBand Film company to have a film exhibition called 'Belfast Now' in the City Hall. 'Belfast Now' is a cultural and creative project that is being developed in partnership with Channel 4 and the Belfast Festival at Queens. The aim of the exhibition is to 'reflect the changing face of Belfast and to promote a dynamic, inclusive and forward-looking vision of the city'. There are two main aspects to the project:-

- to have two short films produced by local film maker Dervla Quigley and photographer Adam Patterson. These films will reflect the artists' vision of 'Belfast Now'; *and*
- to give local citizens and communities the opportunity to upload their own interpretations of 'Belfast Now' by the use of social media including Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. These on-line interpretations may take the form of photographs, a mobile phone video clip or a joke etc.

The organisers wish to screen the two short films and the Facebook pages in either the east exhibition area or the visitor information point room at the front entrance as part of the Belfast Festival at Queens programme in mid October. The exhibition would involve a number of plasma screens being set up with some accompanying panels with information about 'Belfast Now' and the aims of the project etc. Proposed content will be shared with BCC beforehand.

The film exhibition would run for approximately 2 weeks. The organisers may also approach the BBC about having the films and Facebook pages displayed on the large outdoor screens on the City Hall lawns during the MTV event in November. Channel 4 have also expressed an interest in broadcasting the exhibition at a later date. The exhibition has the support of the council's Tourism, Culture & Arts Unit, which see it as a positive way of helping to promote the city.

Key Issues

In considering these applications Members may wish to make reference to the criteria which were in use for the purposes of delegated authority, these being that such requests must:

- be primarily for non-commercial purposes;
- require no funding or other significant resources from the Council;
- be non-offensive and comply with the council's Equality and Good Relations obligations;
- have the potential to help promote Belfast City Council and/or the city of Belfast;
- not unduly affect the day-to-day operation of the building or involve significant risk of damage to the building's infrastructure and/or fabric;
- broadly be considered to contribute to one or more of the Council's corporate strategic objectives; *and*
- provide the Council with appropriate insurance cover and/or indemnities etc. where appropriate.

In each of the above cases it is likely that the organisers will wish to arrange a low-key launch event in the East area, and this presents no operational difficulties.

Members will also be aware that the issue of delegated authority and the management of the City Hall generally is being considered at present, and that party briefings on this topic are imminent. It would therefore be the intention to include the management of exhibitions in the East Entrance area within this broader debate around City Hall management issues generally, unless the Committee indicates that it specifically wishes to retain direct control of exhibition requests as at present.

Resource Implications

Financial

There are no direct costs for the council associated with these requests.

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, and the usual insurances and indemnities would be required.

Decisions required

The Committee is requested to consider the 3 applications for use of the East Entrance for exhibition purposes as set out above and to decide which of these applications are to be approved.

The Committee is also requested to indicate whether it is minded to include the management of exhibition requests in the East Entrance area in the wider City Hall management debate or instead wishes to retain direct control of this matter, with each individual request being reported to the full Committee as at present.

Key to Abbreviations

None.

Documents Attached

None.