



Belfast City Council

Report to	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Use of the City Hall for an E-Counting Demonstration
Date:	17th February, 2012
Reporting Officer:	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (ext 6314)
Contact Officer:	

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	A request has been received from the Chief Electoral Officer for the use of the City Hall on 30th and 31st May, 2012 for the purpose of holding a demonstration of the electronic counting of votes.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The Committee will be aware of the criticism which surrounded the length of time which was taken to announce the results of the Assembly and Referendum counts in May, 2011. The Chief Electoral Officer is keen to investigate the possibility of substantially reducing the time taken for the counting of votes in Northern Ireland elections by considering the introduction of the electronic counting of votes.
2.2	Such a system has been used for the last few years in Scotland and has been welcomed by all of the political parties.
2.3	The first stage in the consideration of such a change to electoral process is an information event by way of a demonstration of how electronic counting works. The demonstration lasts about an hour and a rolling programme of demonstrations would be held over a 2 day period. All elected MLAs and Councillors in Northern Ireland, together with Council and Assembly staff involved in election planning, would be invited to attend.

2.4	Any costs associated with the event would be met by Opt2Vote, the company which delivers the electronic counting package, and the Electoral Office. There would not be any costs accruing to the Council.
2.5	The Electoral Office recognises the importance of Belfast as the capital city of Northern Ireland and the City Hall as an iconic seat of local democracy and, as such, would be very keen to base the demonstration in the City Hall.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	None. All costs will be covered by Opt2Vote and the Electoral Office.

4	Equality and Good Relations Implications
4.1	None.

5	Recommendations
5.1	The Committee is recommended to grant the use of the City Hall for the demonstration of E-counting on 30th and 31st May, 2012.

6	Decision Tracking
Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager	
March, 2012	