



Belfast City Council

Report to	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Armed Forces Day
Date:	22nd June, 2012
Reporting Officer:	Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Officer (Ext 6314)
Contact Officer:	

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The Committee is reminded that in April 2009, April 2010 and April 2011 it considered requests from the Ministry of Defence for the Council to fly the Armed Forces Day flag for a week leading up to the Armed Forces Day itself.
1.2	For the last three years the Council has agreed, in accordance with existing Council policy, that the request to fly the Armed Forces flag at the City Hall be acceded to but that the approval be for one day only. It is worth pointing out, however, that there was not a consensus on this matter between the political parties represented on the Council.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The Committee, at its meeting on 23rd April 2010, agreed that it did not wish to establish a policy position on the Armed Forces Day flag to allow requests to be acted upon without annual reference to the Committee but rather agreed that each request received be dealt with annually on an individual basis.
2.2	This year the Council did not receive a letter in April from the Ministry of Defence requesting that the Council participate in the 2012 event. When the Ministry was contacted about this on 8th June it replied that it had sent a letter to the Chief Executive of all Councils but apologised that the one to Belfast appeared not to have been sent. A copy of the letter which is dated 2nd April but which was received by us on 11th June is attached at Appendix 1. The letter asks that the Council consider flying of the Armed Forces flag at the City Hall from 25th June till 30th June.

2.3	The existing Council policy on the flying of flags allows for flags other than the Union Flag to be flown on specific occasions. For example, the Cross of St. Patrick is flown on 17 March, the European Union Flag is flown on Europe Day on 9 May and the Red Ensign is flown on National Merchant Navy Day on 3 September each year.
2.4	<p>If the Committee were to deal with the request in the same way as in previous years, then the options would be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to accede to the request from the Ministry of Defence for the Armed Forces Flag to be flown at the City Hall for the period from 25th till 30th June; or 2. in line with the decision taken in the last three years, to accede to the request but to limit the period during which the flag will be flown to the Armed Forces Day itself, that is, 30th June; or 3. to refuse the request.
2.5	However, given that the week of the Armed Forces day is from 25th till 30th June and the fact that any Committee decision would not be ratified by the Council until 2nd July, it would appear that it there would not be proper Council authority in place to allow the Council to participate in the event this year. The only way in which this could be accommodated would be if there is a consensus within the Committee as to how to proceed and for the officers to be instructed to act on the Committee's decision.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	None.

4	Equality and Good Relations Implications
4.1	The issues in relation to flying of the Armed Forces Day flag are similar to those identified in connection with the Council's general policy in relation to flags.

5	Recommendations
5.1	The Committee is requested to give consideration to the late request for the Council to participate in the Armed Forces Day event in 2012 and instruct officers how to proceed.

6	Decision Tracking
<p>Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager</p> <p>25th June, 2012</p>	

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Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – Letter from General Sir David Richards GCB CBE ADC, General Chief of the Defence Staff.