Belfast City Council

Report to:	**Strategic Policy & Resources Committee**
Subject:	**Attempted Break In – City Hall**
Date:	19 April 2013
Reporting Officer:	Gerry Millar, Director of Property & Projects, Ext: 6217
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1	**Relevant Background Information**
1.1	Members may be aware from media reports that there was an unsuccessful attempt to break in to the City Hall in the early hours of Friday 5th April 2013. The sequence of events was as follows:-
1.2	• at 03:58 the BCC Control Room staff were alerted by their motion-detection system of an attempted break-in at the exterior window of the party room of the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP); • at around the same time some Cleansing city-centre night-shift staff also spotted the individual concerned and reported this to the Control Room; • the PSNI were called and arrived a little before 04:20 and arrested the individual at the scene.
1.3	It is important to note that the individual involved did not succeed in entering the building, and that the enhanced security measures installed following the last incidents were instrumental in providing early warning of the incident to Control Room staff.
1.4	The person arrested by police is to be charged with attempted burglary and has since been bailed under certain conditions. When questioned as to his motive for the attempt the individual involved apparently stated that he was 'frustrated' with the council and decided to break a window, however the CCTV footage shows a sustained attempt to gain entry (using what appeared to be a knife).
1.5	In terms of actual damage there was some minor damage caused to an exterior pane of glass and the wooden frame, however following a short delay while the Scenes of Crime Officers (SOCO) were on-site the Property Maintenance unit made good the damage. Contrary to reports, the bullet-resistant glass was not damaged and there was no damage caused to the actual PUP room itself.
1.6	It is unfortunately the case that at least one local newspaper reported the incident in a way which was almost completely inaccurate, and gave the impression that the person involved had successfully gained entry to the building by scaling the front façade and had then broken a window and made his way to the PUP room and caused damage. The council's Corporate Communications unit has contacted the newspaper in question

	with a view to securing a retraction and/or correction of the report.
1.7	However, this incident illustrates how easily incorrect media reporting can cause concern for members in circumstances where they are contacted for a response about an incident by the media but have no topical information with which to respond.
1.8	Consequently it has been agreed that, should there be any similar incidents involving the City Hall in the future, the existing text notification system operated by the Emergency Control Room will be used to inform all members of the incident and the scale and scope of what has occurred as soon as possible after the event.

2	**Key Issues**
2.1	It is firstly pleasing to note that the incident was detected early by security staff using the new equipment, that they responded promptly and correctly and that this resulted in an arrest.
2.2	The incident also highlights the need for information to be made available to members promptly where these sorts of incidents occur, and hopefully the text-notification system will achieve this to members' satisfaction.

3	**Resource Implications**
3.1	There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

4	**Equality and Good Relations Implications**
4.1	There are no equality implications arising from this report.

5	**Recommendations**
5.1	It is recommended that the Committee notes this report and recognises the prompt response by the security team to the incident. It is also recommended that the Committee endorses the proposal to use the text-notification system to apprise members of any similar incidents in the future.

6	**Decision Tracking**

7	**Key to Abbreviations**
None	

8	**Documents Attached**
None	