



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic, Policy & Resources Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Belfast City Hall Big Screen
<b>Date:</b>	20 June 2013
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext. 3470
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Gerry Copeland, City Events Manager, ext. 3412

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
<b>1.1</b>	<p>The purpose of this report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Is to request approval that Officers issue an Expression of Interest Tender for a content provider for the City Hall Big Screen.</li><li>- If Members approve the above process, seek approval from Members to limit content and operations of the City Hall Big Screen to Council projects until a new screen content/management company is appointed.</li></ul>
<b>1.2</b>	<p>In April 2010 the Strategic Policy &amp; Resources Committee agreed that a 2012 Olympic Inspired Big Screen be positioned in the grounds of City Hall. The Screen is part of 22 LED systems located across regional capitals and key cities.</p>
<b>1.3</b>	<p>Up until October 2012 the BBC provided an extensive screen management process, which included local BBC NI input. However, this entire resource has been drastically reduced and means that anyone wishing to relay images on the screen must have these pre-formatted at their own cost. Plus technical assistance and camera relays must be sourced and paid for by the event organisers.</p>
<b>1.4</b>	<p>These changes mean that the BBC only provide a limited screen operations service, which is managed from its offices in Birmingham, for all twenty-two screens, with zero input from BBC NI. This limited service will cease in September 2013. However, in December 2012 the Council agreed to take part in a joint procurement exercise so a new screen content and management organisation could be found.</p>
<b>1.5</b>	<p>Unfortunately this joint procurement exercise has not taken place as the vast majority of the Big Screen UK network are no longer supportive of such a concept. This means that come September 2013 the screen will have only BBC News 24 showing and there will be no screen content management system in place.</p>
<b>1.6</b>	<p>Given the above Members are being asked to approve that Officers issue an Expression of Interest Tender on behalf of BCC. If the Council agree to this any appointment will be based on a zero cost to BCC and possibly the creation of an income stream. If unsuccessful in this process a further report will be taken to Councillors seeking views on the future of the Big Screen.</p>
<b>1.7</b>	<p>Another difficulty, which the BBC position has resulted in, is an increase in workloads for Officers, in regard to programme, editing and managing screen content. Therefore, the request to limit screen content and operations to Council projects until a potential new</p>

screen content/management company is appointed.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
<b>2.1</b>	The BBC has been involved as the content and screen management provider since the screen's inception. However, as stated above, there has been a rolling reduction in the BBC's input to this process, which will formally terminate at the end of September 2013. This is due to BBC budgetary constraints.
<b>2.2</b>	The resulting affect, in the BBC's reduction in services, has meant a significant increase in staff resources from the Council's City Events Unit, who are now being asked to vet and arrange content for the Big Screen. This work entails dealing with requests, editing content, dealing with event organisers who wish to use the screen and liaising with the BBC's team in Birmingham.
<b>2.3</b>	Given the above, Members are requested to approve that the Big Screen content is now limited to programmes and initiatives of the Council. These restrictions would stay in place until a new screen/management company is appointed.
<b>2.4</b>	In addition Members are asked to note that NI Planning Service has granted planning consent, for the Big Screen, to stay in situ until April 2014. Members initially agreed that the screen should be considered as part of the refurbishment of the Donegall Square, to be undertaken by the Department of Social Development, as part of phase two of the Streets Ahead programme. However, the Department of Social Development have now 'suspended' this phase of work. Therefore, Officers are investigating the Council's options in order that a solution to the planning issue can be found.

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<u>Financial</u> The Council has agreed to allocate £40,000 as part of the Department's annual budget. These finances are used to cover the operational costs of the screen alongside animation of the grounds.
<b>3.2</b>	<u>Human Resources</u> There would be no additional staffing requirements of the City Events Unit if Members were to agree to restrict screen content to BCC related content. However, if Members wish permit external use of the screen there would be a requirement to appoint either a temporary member of staff or an external contractor. At this stage it is difficult to define these costs, but it would be in the region of an additional £30,000 per calendar year on top of the current £40,000 indicated in 3.1 above (total cost per annum £70,000).
<b>3.3</b>	<u>Asset and Other Implications</u> As per 2.4, Members are asked to note that NI Planning Service has granted planning consent, for the Big Screen, to stay in situ until April 2014. As stated in 2.4, Members have agreed that the screen should be considered as part of the refurbishment of the Donegall Square, to be undertaken by the Department of Social Development, as part of phase two of the Streets Ahead programme. However, the Department of Social Development have now 'suspended' this phase of work. Therefore, Officers are investigating the Council's options in order that a solution to the planning issue can be found, with a report being taken back to Council in due course.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	There are no relevant equality and good relations implications. However, the project has the potential to bring together people from a wide range of backgrounds and therefore promote good relations in the city.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<b>5.1</b>	Members are asked to:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Approve that Officers issue an Expression of Interest Tender for a content/management provider for the City Hall Big Screen at a zero cost to Council. It would be suggested that appointment of an appropriate supplier be delegated to the Director of Development.</li> <li>- Recommend that until a new screen content provider is appointed that Officers are permitted to restrict content to details generated by BCC.</li> </ul>
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<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
<p>If approved Officers will monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the Big Screens tender process. These outcomes will be presented to Members in the Autumn of 2013.</p> <p>Timeline: Autumn 2013 <span style="float: right;">Reporting Officer: Gerry Copeland</span></p>	

<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation	

<b>8</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
None	