



Subject:	Exhibition Area – changes to layout and pricing
Date:	16 December 2016
Reporting officer:	Gerry Millar, Director of Property & Projects
Contact Officer:	George Wright, Head of Facilities Management

Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of report or summary of main issues
1.1	To seek the Committee’s approval to implement the proposals set out below in relation to the operation of the new Exhibition Area in City Hall.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt the proposals in respect of the operation of the new Exhibition Area as set out at below • Agree to charge an entrance fee for commercial bookings broadly in the order of £2 per person, but with discounts available in respect of the provision of multi-lingual head-sets when booked as a group, in order to encourage use and enhance income.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Members will be aware that a paper was presented to the Committee in November 2016 seeking approval for a new Reception arrangement for the Exhibition. This proposal involved the removal of the former PUP room area as the main reception for the Exhibition, to be replaced by a bespoke new facility on the main floor inside the front entrance.
3.2	Following some discussion on the matter concerns were expressed by some members that the proposal may create un-necessary bottlenecks on the main marble area, and it was referred back for officers to re-consider the proposal to see what alternatives may exist. Officers had also noted that there would be noise impact on the Lavery Room.
3.3	Officers have reviewed the proposals as requested, but have concluded that in any event insufficient time now remains to prepare alternative proposals and get furniture etc ordered. Consequently the original proposal, which uses the former PUP party room as the main

entrance and reception area, must be re-instated on the basis previously agreed.

- 3.4 The proposal to create a new reception area on the marble was developed primarily to enhance the potential income to be derived from the sale of merchandising. By contrast, using the original reception area will mean that no merchandising can be sold at all on Saturdays or Sundays or on any evening (because any such sales will now have to be carried out by staff at the main Reception as opposed to the dedicated Exhibitions facility). Therefore it is likely that overall merchandising sales will be adversely affected.
- 3.5 There remains a concern that the original proposal will itself inevitably create bottlenecks, given that it is only 1.4m wide at its narrowest point and must provide for disabled access etc. while the proposal in relation to the marble would have allowed for more effective management of a build-up of visitors (including the use of the former PUP room and the room opposite for waiting areas), and the council's principal consultants Redhead Ltd had expressed their agreement with this approach.
- 3.6 However, as outlined above, the facility is due to be complete and to initiate a series of 'soft' opening events during April 2017, and consequently officers do not believe that it is now feasible to develop alternative options, obtain Heritage Service approval and amend the overall project plan in order to deliver a new option in the time remaining.
- The Committee is therefore requested to approve the reversion to the original reception location in the former PUP offices.**
- 3.7 Members will also be aware that in the previous proposal entrance to the exhibition was free, although charges will be levied for head-set hire, souvenir booklet and app downloads etc. Officers considered recommending a general admission charge of £1, but concluded that the administration associated with this would outweigh the benefit. However there would be the opportunity to introduce a charge for Commercial Tour Groups and this is considered below and the potential for donations remains.
- 3.8 Commercial Tour Groups - It is also proposed that separate entrance charges be introduced for commercial tour groups (e.g. cruise-ship bookings etc), where each participant pays a significant premium to the relevant tour operators. This mirrors the approach recently adopted by the Committee in relation to the council's standard public tour offer and which has produced additional income of £12,067 in the 2016/17 financial year to date (1st 6 months).
- 3.9 It is proposed to adopt the same approach to charging for the new Exhibition Area, and would involve a charge broadly in the order of £2 per person, but with discounts available in respect of the provision of multi-lingual head-sets when booked as a group, in order to encourage use and enhance income. This would generate estimated additional income of £61,425.
- 3.10 Following a discussion at the party group leaders' forum the overall logo and strap-line to be used for the Exhibition Area is to be changed from the previous 'City Hall for All'

3.11	<p>approach simply to 'Belfast City Hall' and using the same graphic as previously agreed.</p> <p>This new logo - which will be used on associated signage, promotional material and merchandising etc – is set out for note by the Committee in Appendix 1(a). Also included for note at Appendix 1(b) is the artwork to be used for the refurbished Bobbin coffee-shop area (which is intended to be operational by early March 2017).</p>
3.12	<p><u>Finance and Resource Implications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levying the recommended charge for commercial groups would generate additional estimated income of £61,425, based on anticipated visitor numbers
3.13	<p><u>Equality & Good Relations Implications</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 (a) New Exhibition logo</p> <p>Appendix 1(b) New Bobbin logo</p>