



Subject:	Requests for revision of hospitality for supported conferences
Date:	25 October 2019
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor / Director of Legal & Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Aisling Milliken, Functions and Exhibition Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	This report seeks approval for the modification to the current criteria and function package provided to Visit Belfast and Tourism NI supported conferences.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> approve the recommendation to continue to offer complimentary function rooms and waive correlating room charges relating to Visit Belfast and Tourism NI supported conferences honour existing civic hospitality receptions approved by committee, however discontinue the offer of civic wine receptions going forward for future conference related functions.

3.0	Main report
	<u>Background Information</u>
3.1	Members will be aware that the Committee, at its meeting of 6th January 2017, agreed to modify the criteria governing access to the City Hall function rooms for external organisations and the introduction of hire charges for some categories of function.
3.2	The Committee agreed to further modifications, at its meeting on 23 rd June 2017, “where a large event with significant international attendees is booked (which may often involve a bid to bring a specific event or function to Belfast) and is supported by the Belfast Welcome Centre the Committee may at its discretion waive or reduce any room hire charges and/or agree the provision of a civic drinks reception up to a maximum value of £500”
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.3	The current offering is complimentary room hire, waiving of room charges <u>and</u> provision of a civic drinks reception to the value of £500. In one month alone this year 6 Visit Belfast supported conferences were approved. The loss of room hire revenue was £2850 and provision of wine supplied was £3000 plus the additional charges for staff resources and ancillary costs to host the functions.
3.4	In 2019 the cost for wine stock for Visit Belfast receptions to date is £11,500 plus staffing and ancillary costs.
3.5	The Council’s Economic Development Unit and Functions Management Unit have met with key representatives at Visit Belfast and Tourism NI Managers to discuss the Councils support for conference business into the City and the welcome packages and hospitality offered.
3.6	Both Visit Belfast and Tourism NI have confirmed that one of the key attractions for conferences to Belfast is the provision of complimentary use of Belfast City Hall prestigious functions rooms for welcome receptions and dinners. The provision, or otherwise, of a wine reception is unlikely to impact the appeal of using City Hall as a venue.
3.7	It is worth noting the majority of conferences have large guest numbers attending circa 450+ meaning the £500 civic wine reception provided needs to be supplemented by the client and their caterer. The removal of the civic wine reception streamlines the catering provision and

3.8	<p>improves the operational management of the function for City Hall, Visit Belfast and the client by allowing a single provider to provide the service.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The implementation of removal of civic wine receptions at Visit Belfast/ Tourism NI supported conferences dinners/ receptions enables cost savings in terms of wine stock purchased and overtime staffing costs to deliver the receptions which could potentially save up to £25,000 per year.</p> <p>Continuing to offer complimentary room rental has no direct costs, and remains an important factor in attracting conferences and significant events to the city.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.9	<p>There are no direct good relations or equality implications arising from this report.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>None</p>