

<b>Report on</b>	Policy on Room Hire - draft
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	Wednesday 13 <sup>th</sup> January 2021
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Philip Moffett, Head of Democratic Services
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Ann McAleer, Corporate Policy & Equality Officer

<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	x

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To consider further the council's current general Policy on Room Hire, with specific reference to a revised draft version following previous committee discussions.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	The Council has a policy in place developed specifically to deal with room hire and the availability of Council Civic Buildings and facilities for the transaction of council business. The policy, previously reviewed in 2018 was considered at November and December 2020 meetings of Committee.
2.2	Whilst a full review has been undertaken of the policy discussion has centred on section 5.3 (exclusions to hire), with particular reference to the unavailability of rooms for events and activities which could be viewed as promoting the profile and interests of political parties over other political parties. The policy refers specifically to council civic buildings and council facilities with the latter being all facilities, except the council offices, where rooms are available for hire.
2.3	On considering the merits of removing or retaining the exclusions to hire as referenced within the policy the Committee at its December meeting considered research on the current practice of similar organisations to the Council on the application of their room hire arrangements, with specific reference to the hire of rooms within civic offices and facilities. It was agreed at December Committee and subsequently approved by Council that the series of amendments presented be incorporated into a revised policy and brought before a future meeting for a final consideration.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	The Policy has been revised with the areas presented to December committee as suggestions for incorporation, based on research undertaken on similar organisations to Mid Ulster Council in Northern Ireland and other jurisdictions.

3.2 The revised (draft) policy is attached as appendix A for consideration. Amendment has primarily been made to section 5.3 (Limitations as to Hire) and for ease of reference section 5.3 is set out below:

Extract

### **5.3 Limitations as to Hire**

*5.3.1 As a local government body, the Council is cognisant that from time to time its civic offices and facilities will be sought for hire for political purposes.*

*5.3.2 The hire of council owned premises for events, activities or otherwise which could be viewed as promoting the profile and interests of a political party over other political parties shall be permitted i.e. for political purposes. This refers to all political parties and independent representatives irrespective if they have representation on Mid Ulster Council or not. Hires identified as such shall be limited to the following, as detailed:*

*(i) That such hires be restricted to council facilities only and not extend to the hire of rooms in either of its three civic offices*

*(ii) That such hires of a room within a council facility are restricted to rooms that are available to the public generally and paid for at the same hire rate levied on any other member of the public*

*(iii) That any banners, posters, leaflets or any other paraphernalia forming part of the event be displayed and made available within the room only under hire within the facility*

*(iv) Block bookings shall not be permitted for such hires*

*(v) Hiring of a room within any of the council facilities shall be accepted and permitted except for events, activities or otherwise which are linked to elections and political party campaigning*

*5.3.3 This section (5.3) will not preclude an elected member of the council or group of elected representatives from booking a room during normal opening hours for the purpose of progressing council business in their representative role, as referred at 5.2.1 above.*

*5.3.4. Decisions on the use of all premises, except for the three civic buildings, shall be delegated to any Director of Council as referenced within Council's Scheme of Delegation for Senior Officers. The Chief Executive has ultimate responsibility for the civic buildings.*

*5.3.3 When it is felt that requests for the use of rooms within either of the civic buildings or facilities require council consideration, for events deemed as controversial these will be reported to Council. Where there is not*

	<i>sufficient time for Council to be consulted approval shall only be given following consultation with the Chair of the relevant Committee and Council.</i>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b>
	Financial: not applicable
	Human: not applicable
	Risk Management: not applicable
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b>
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: An equality screening has been completed and it has been determined that the policy implemented as presented would not present any adverse impacts on equality of opportunity with respect room hire.
	Rural Needs Implications: A rural needs Impact Assessment has been completed and has been determined that this policy applies equitably to all council offices available for hire across the district, irrespective if they fall within an urban or rural defined environment.
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	That the committee considers this paper and subsequently approves the revised draft Policy on Room Hire.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
	Appendix A: Policy on Room Hire (revised draft)  Appendix B: Equality Screening on Room Hire Policy (revised draft)