Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Sponsorship Request BelTech 2015
Date:	17 February 2015
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development ext 3470
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1	**Relevant Background Information**
1.1	The creative and digital industry (CDI) is identified in the Draft Tourism and Integrated Economic Development Strategies as a priority growth sector and future economic driver for the city. Development support to the sector was included in the Council's Investment Programme through initiatives such as the Creative Hub and Forthriver Innovation Centre.
1.2	The Economic Development Unit through planning for Transfer of Functions from Invest NI under Local Government Reform is considering how: - Development support to the sector could be more strategic (through advanced sector specific business start support aligned with the *Go For It* Programme); - Activity amongst stakeholders in this arena could be better co-ordinated; and - Events and conferences targeting the CDI sector could increase their economic and sectoral impact if they were rationalised in number but their offer and level of support increased.
1.3	A partnership approach with CDI stakeholders is central to creating the necessary conditions for CDI prosperity and this is a proposal within the draft Integrated Economic Strategy (IES).
1.4	Conferences and events to promote collaboration, share best practice and encourage access to the sector are critical to its long-term success and are part of the wider support infrastructure offered by private and public sector partners. A number of these events take place in the city each year and the Development Committee, at its October meeting, agreed that there is a need to develop criteria to help the Council take decisions about how it can maximise the benefits of its investment in such events. This work is currently being finalised, in the context of the draft integrated economic and tourism strategies.

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1.5	The inaugural Belfast Technology Conference (BelTech) event took place in April 2014 at the Europa Hotel and in Belfast City Hall. The event was sponsored to a value of £15,000 by Belfast City Council and attracted over 250 tech companies and 300 students over a three day period.
1.6	The conference helped inform technology professionals and businesses of the emerging technologies that allow them to innovate and compete effectively at a global level. It also helped educate and inspire kids/parents/teachers about the potential of a career in Digital Technology.
1.7	The conference brought together tech and business leaders as well as politicians from Belfast, USA and Europe including Julie Hanna, IdeaLab/Socialtext, San Francisco, Mike Bracken, Executive Director of Digital, UK Government, and Sheree Atcheson, Founder of Women Who Code, Belfast. Masterclasses and conference keynotes and panels were attended by local tech/digital businesses covering topics such as Big Data and Analytics, Agile Project Delivery, Emerging Technologies and Starting a Tech Business.
1.8	The second annual Belfast Technology Conference event has been announced and will take place at Titanic Belfast from the 29 April - 1 May 2015 curated by KAINOS Software and hosted by Aisling Events Ltd.

2	Key Issues
2.1	Aisling Events Limited has asked Belfast City Council for consideration of sponsorship towards the 2015 Belfast Technology Conference (BelTech) 29 April – 1 May 2015.
2.2	The conference itinerary is as follows: Day 1 – Belfast City Hall (tbc) A series of half day Masterclasses providing intensive introductions to current "hot topics", such as Big Data, Smart City Technologies, Cyber Security and development opportunities in areas such as health, mobile app development and women in technology. Day 2 – Titanic Belfast Full day conference, focussing on Technology Professionals and Businesses featuring Big Data, Internet of things with a focus on Smart City Technologies, Cyber Security and Dev Ops and Starting a Tech Business. Companies confirmed to provide a keynote address are Amazon and Dataseeds. Day 3 – Titanic Belfast Full day event focussing on Post Primary School Children, their Parents and Teachers and will feature a mix of engaging technology demos and conversational sessions.
2.3	Throughout days 2 and 3, an exhibition of leading NI and Global high tech organisations will run to allow attendees to get a more detailed understanding of the people, products and innovations presented at the Conference and will provide a unique opportunity for Belfast based tech companies to network and do business with conference attendees and exhibitors.
2.4	The overall aims of the Belfast Tech conference are:

	- For local businesses and new business starts to gain an awareness of emerging technologies and practices that will improve their effectiveness and career development; - Opportunity to interact with highly successful tech/business leaders and role models; - Build personal network and enhance career prospects; - Contribute to building a vibrant Technology community and culture in Belfast and NI; - Contribute to building a vibrant Tech culture in Belfast (in particular) that can rival Dublin, London, Tel Aviv; - Contribute to the NI Innovation Strategy; - Exemplar event that can be referenced during FDI investment Discussions; - Teachers will be better informed to advise their pupils about Tech; - Contribute to building a highly skilled STEM skill base in NI.
2.5	Sponsorship of the Belfast Technology Conference will provide Council with the following: - Full page advertisement in conference brochure - Prime time positioning of company logo on all materials (Inc website - press advertisements and marketing materials) - Included in pre event publicity and post event publicity - Company material in delegate packs - Prime exhibition space - Permission to display unlimited company marketing stands at the venue - Delegate passes (Amount to be agreed)
2.6	The measure of economic impact the conference provides is difficult to quantify, however based on the 2014 BelTech Conference Officers have been advised that: - There was a total footfall of 350 persons - Total ticket sales were £5,699 and the average ticket price was £99 per day - 20 local businesses exhibited at the conference - 250 local businesses attended the conference - 5 local schools attended the conference.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	Financial Members are asked to consider the requested sponsorship request from Aisling Events Limited of up to £15,000 towards the Belfast Technology Conference 2015. Members should note that it is anticipated that approximately 50% of any proposed sponsorship would be paid before the end of March 2015 with the remainder being paid post event from the 2015/16 budgets.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are no specific equality and good relations implications.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are asked to consider the request for sponsorship of the Belfast Technology Conference 2015.

6	Key to Abbreviations
CDI – Creative and Digital Industry BelTech - Belfast Technology Conference	