



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	Invest NI - Request to use the City Hall
Date:	Friday, 4 March, 2011
Reporting Officer:	Peter McNaney, Chief Executive (Ext. 6002)
Contact Officer:	Gareth Quinn, Senior Democratic Services Officer (Ext. 6316)

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	The Council has received a request from Mr Alastair Hamilton, Chief Executive of Invest NI, to use the City Hall to host the Invest NI Staff Conference for a half-day on Monday, 23 May, 2011.
1.2	This event aims to provide a platform for the Board and senior management of Invest NI to highlight to staff the achievements of the organisation, the positive impact that Invest NI has had on the economy, and to recognise the value of their work. The event will also provide an opportunity for the aims and objectives of Invest NI for the forthcoming year to be outlined to staff.

2	Key Issues
2.1	Invest NI's purpose is to improve the NI economy through business development. It seeks to do this by supporting new businesses, by helping existing business to grow through a focus on innovation and export development, by attracting high quality inward investment and by stimulating a culture of entrepreneurship.
2.2	Since its formation in 2002, Invest NI has made over 3,350 offers of support to businesses in the Belfast area, with £352m of support offered towards projects which planned to invest over £1.85bn. Inward investors alone have created over 10,500 new jobs and safeguarded a further 3,300 in Belfast and over 2,750 new business starts have been supported.
2.3	Key sectors in Northern Ireland such as Financial Services, Business Services, Technology and the Creative Industries are beginning to grow. These sectors, many of which are concentrated around the Greater Belfast area, also offer considerable opportunity for the growth of both locally and internationally owned businesses. Furthermore, the Greater Belfast area is historically the prime location of choice for inward investors and it is important that Invest NI and

	Belfast City Council work closely to project the benefits of the region to prospective investors and to maximise the growth potential of our local business base.
2.4	Invest NI is undertaking a significant change management programme to ensure that its support and services are available to the widest possible business base, including many businesses and sectors which would traditionally sit outside its client bank. Through this change management programme, Invest NI is actively working to establish much closer working relationships with all those involved in supporting economic development, including Belfast City Council.
2.5	The Council is currently reviewing its economic development activities and is working with external stakeholders, including Invest NI, to develop an agreed city-wide approach to increasing Belfast's economic competitiveness. This will result in the development and delivery of a new Integrated Economic Strategy and the Belfast Masterplan
2.6	Furthermore, as resources become increasingly scarce and the need for economic growth becomes more pressing, our relationship with key stakeholders, such as Invest NI, will become more important. In essence we will need to ensure that our work and priorities for Belfast both influence and complement the work of Invest NI.
2.7	This event would also provide an opportunity for the Council to address the staff of Invest NI, making them aware of the issues which are important to the city in respect of economic development and to encourage a partnership approach in improving Belfast's economy through effective business development.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	None

4	Equality Implications
4.1	N/A

5	Recommendations
5.1	It is recommended that the Committee agrees to provide the use of the City Hall for the Invest NI Staff Conference on Monday, 23 May, 2011.

6	Decision Tracking
Officers responsible: Gareth Quinn, Senior Democratic Services Officer April 2011	

7	Key to Abbreviations

8	Documents Attached
N/A	

