



Subject:	Sister Cities Management – US Cities
Date:	10 th June 2015
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development
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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	Members will be aware that one of the key commitments in the Council’s Investment Programme 2012 - 2015, is that the Council will work with city partners to promote Belfast proactively on the international stage to attract trade and investment, increase visitor and student numbers and build the networks necessary to support growth.
1.2	Over the past two years, work has been undertaken to develop and deliver an International Relations Framework and Action Plan that seeks to shape how city stakeholders can work together in a stronger and purposeful way, to maximise the economic impact for Belfast as a whole.
1.3	This framework and a two year action plan were agreed by Members at the August 2013 Development Committee. An update report was presented to the Development Committee on 13 th May 2015. The purpose of this report was to seek Members’ approval to explore opportunities and implications of putting in place partnership-based management arrangements to guide and support the respective work programmes to oversee and support the formal Sister City Relationships with Boston and Nashville. A separate report will be brought back on the relationships with Chinese cities at the appropriate time.

2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Agree to the proposal to undertake a planning visit to Boston in late summer 2015, to take forward opportunities for Belfast – Boston collaboration. – Grant approval for the Lord Mayor to attend along with appropriate officers. – Note progress with respect to re-convening the relevant partners from the Belfast – Nashville steering group, to identify opportunities for collaboration between the cities.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The International Relations Programme for 2015 – 2016 contains activities which can deliver on the aims and objectives set out in the International Relations Framework across the priority target markets and areas of work.</p>
3.2	<p>In line with these aims and objectives, a series of emerging activities are set out below, focusing on the linkages with Boston and Nashville, currently the only two US-based sister city linkages that Belfast has in place.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Boston</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Members should note that the Mayor of Boston has completed the process of setting up a Belfast – Boston steering group. This now comprises of five voluntary members chaired by a politician, including two business, one clergy and one third sector representative. – Based on approval by Members at the May meeting, the Chair of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and Officers are undertaking a process to identify interested stakeholders within the different sectors outlined within the Belfast Boston Sister City Agreement. A list of potential interested steering group members will be presented to Committee in due course for consideration and endorsement. This will take place over the summer period. – Since the exploratory civic visit to Boston, undertaken by the Lord Mayor in April 2015, opportunities have arisen for concrete cooperation with the City of Boston. The Lord Mayor has been approached by the North Eastern University in Boston to

become the official education partner under the Sister Cities Agreement. Specifically, the University wishes to collaborate with Belfast City Council and relevant stakeholders to develop a youth transformation initiative looking at the challenges facing young people in both cities. The detail of this proposal has still to be developed and costed.

- Following on from the Council's involvement in hosting two recent visits from the Boston Police and judicial system, there is interest from both to engage with Council and its stakeholders should the youth initiative proceed.
- Other work being undertaken by the Lord Mayor, includes several working sessions by Skype with Mr John Cullinane, original founding member of the Friends of Belfast network in Boston. John is a world expert in assisting cities in positioning and selling themselves globally. He has been assisting the Lord Mayor and the Chief Executive in developing Council's new Positioning Strategy and City Narrative.
- Finally, conversations have been ongoing between the Lord Mayor, Officers and Invest NI in Boston with a view to exploring the benefit of hosting an inward trade and academic mission from Boston around the Connected Health & Life Sciences sector.

3.4

In order to make progress with the above areas of mutual interest within the Sister Cities Agreement, it is proposed that a second working visit to Boston is undertaken by the Lord Mayor and an Officer in late summer/early autumn. This would be an opportunity to meet again with partners to refine thoughts around work with the Boston Police, the North Eastern University and Invest NI, and also to meet the new Belfast Boston steering group to agree concrete plans for future cooperation.

3.5

Nashville

Members will be aware that there has been a Sister City relationship between Belfast and Nashville for some years. Activities of those partners working on Belfast – Nashville initiatives were previously co-ordinated through a steering group and the council's Tourism Development Unit historically provided the secretariat for this group, given the original focus on cultural linkages. Partners have been working independently on their linkages and there are a number of mature partnerships which continue to function without any requirement for City Council support. There are a number of new potential opportunities for collaboration that have recently emerged. In order to clarify these and identify a role, if any, for Belfast City Council, a meeting has been arranged for mid-June with stakeholders

	<p>keen to engage in Nashville.</p>
3.6	<p>The purpose of the meeting will be to understand the scale and scope of current linkages and to identify whether there is any added value in taking a wider perspective on those linkages, through a city partnership steering group. A further report will be presented to Members with regard to this in due course.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>A budget of £150,000 has been set aside for the delivery of the Council’s International Relations Framework and Action Plan.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>The International Relations Framework has been equality screened.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
4.1	None