



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	St Patrick's Day Celebrations 2012 – Washington DC
Date:	20 January 2012
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, Ext 3470
Contact Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, Ext 3470

Relevant Background Information	
1.1	Members will be aware of the significant political and lobbying activity which takes place over the St Patrick's Day celebrations in Washington DC. Over the years this has been used as an opportunity by the political establishment and business community to influence political support for the peace process and to promote the island of Ireland as a profitable investment location for US businesses.
1.2	Over the last number of years, the Northern Ireland Bureau in Washington has been very active in working with the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in ensuring that Northern Ireland is given visibility at the events which take place in Washington at this time. The First and Deputy First Ministers along with Executive Ministers are regular attendees at the White House reception and other events in the US capital at this time.

Key Issues	
2.1	The Northern Ireland Bureau is currently finalising arrangements for a business breakfast to be held on Tuesday 20 March 2012 at which the First Minister and deputy First Minister will be presenting the Northern Ireland business proposition to business leaders from across the United States.
2.2	The theme of the breakfast will be Northern Ireland 2012 and the tourism industry. Focus will be given to Belfast's tourism offer and in particular the opening of Titanic Belfast and the wider Titanic events programme.
2.3	The Director of Development has been contacted by the Director of the Northern Ireland Bureau to suggest that given the level of coverage which Belfast and the Titanic related

	events are likely to be given at the Bureau's Breakfast Briefing and a range of other events it would be appropriate for the Lord Mayor and the Chair of the Development Committee to travel to Washington DC to participate at the Breakfast Briefing.
2.4	<p>Should the Lord Mayor and the Chair of the Development Committee be given approval to attend the Breakfast Briefing, the Northern Ireland Bureau will seek to ensure that they would also receive invitations to other events where there will be further opportunities to promote the city as an investment and tourism destination. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The American Ireland Fund Dinner, Monday 19 March 2012 • Speaker's Lunch, Tuesday 20 March 2012 • Irish Ambassador's Reception, Tuesday 20 March 2012
2.5	The White House reception, hosted by President Obama, also takes place on Tuesday 20 March. Invitations to this event are issued by the State Department. The Acting Consul General, Kevin Roland, has indicated that he would seek invitations for the Lord Mayor and the Chair of Development Committee should they be attending the Northern Ireland Bureau Breakfast Briefing.
2.6	In addition, the American Consulate would be willing to arrange meetings in New York with investors in Belfast such as the New York Stock Exchange as part of the visit programme.

	Recommendations
3.1	It is recommended that the Committee agree that the Lord Mayor and the Chair of the Development Committee attends the Northern Ireland Bureau Breakfast Briefing and other associated events in Washington DC and to visit investors in New York City before returning to Belfast. It is recommended that they are accompanied by the Chief Executive and the Director of Development or their nominees.

	Resource Implications
4.1	The costs of the visit are not likely to exceed £5000 and will be met from existing budgetary provisions.