



Subject:	International Linkages Update
Date:	12 August 2015
Reporting Officer:	Lisa Toland, Head of Economic Initiatives & International 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	<p>The purpose of this report is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Update Members on a number of planned activities under the council's International Relations Framework.– Seek approval for the use of resources towards the delivery of the respective events and activities, within the approved Departmental budgets.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Consider and agree the council's engagement in the Sister Cities International Summit in April 2016, up to a value of £10,000, and to host the sister cities of Nashville and Boston as part of this event.– Agree council support for the Youth Transformation Project, up to a value of £40,000.– Agree to support a small dinner reception for the New York City legislators as part of a visit to Belfast in October 2015, at a cost of no more that £3,000, to be hosted by the Chair of City Growth and Regeneration Committee.– Approve a budget of £10,000 towards travel, accommodation and event hosting costs as part of the January 2016 Tech Mission visit, including attendance by the

	Lord Mayor and a designated Officer.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>International Sister City Event, April 2016</u></p> <p>Belfast City Council, along with 62 other Irish and Northern Irish local authorities who have US-based sister city and partnership linkages, have been invited by the cities of Dublin and San Jose to participate in an international summit to take place in Dublin in April 2016. This event will celebrate Northern Ireland / Ireland – US connections, including the role that these relationships have played in supporting sustainable economic growth on the island of Ireland.</p>
3.2	<p>The Dublin event will take place over two days, from 22 to 23 April 2016. It is proposed that sister cities in Northern Ireland and Ireland will host their partner cities either before or after these dates. In the case of Belfast, this would involve issuing invitations to the Mayors of Nashville and Boston to attend the Dublin event and to come to Belfast for a series of meetings in advance or after of the Dublin event. Depending on the composition of the in-bound groups, the visit to Belfast will involve a series of one to one meetings with relevant individual groups as well as opportunities to update the delegations on wider corporate and city developments. It will also offer an opportunity to re-focus the individual linkages with Boston and Nashville to ensure maximum benefit.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Belfast – Boston Youth Transformation Project</u></p> <p>As part of the sister city linkage with Boston established in 2014, the theme of youth engagement emerged as a priority for potential collaboration between the cities.</p>
3.4	<p>In the course of a number of preliminary visits and engagements between the cities, the North Eastern University (NEU) and the Irish International Immigrants Centre in Boston have proposed to develop a two city Youth Transformation Project.</p>
3.5	<p>The overarching aim of the proposed project is to encourage and empower a small group of young, unemployed, men and women from Belfast and Boston to be future leaders in their communities, and to work toward building an inclusive and participatory society in both cities.</p>
3.6	<p>Both cities experience disadvantage, intolerance and friction. This project seeks to facilitate integration and transformation: not only of the young participants and how they view themselves in society but also of how systems deal with young people in need.</p>

3.7	The target group in mind are those who are not only unemployed but equally have the potential to become change leaders in their community.
3.8	<p>The main elements to this project are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A reciprocal visit of 7 days duration for 12 young people from each city. – Enabling participants to visit key agencies in both cities such as the police, the judicial and justice systems, community leaders, and educational establishments. – To document reflections, learning, and develop recommendations and pilot initiatives for consideration by both cities in respect to meeting the needs of young people who experience inequality. – Each participant will be expected to present their learning to a group of their peers (no less than ten).
3.9	The project has, as its projected timeframe, an outward visit of Belfast young people in October 2015 with an inward visit occurring in February/March 2016. Project findings would be compiled by May 2016. It is anticipated that the overall programme will require a budget of £80,000 with a request from Council for £40,000.
3.10	<p>NorthEastern University, in partnership with the Irish International Immigration Centre, are the Boston partners for this initiative and Belfast City Council is currently undertaking exploratory discussions with local stakeholders including the 174 Trust, Springboard, Probation Board NI, PSNI, Stratagem, Youth Justice Agency and Belfast Metropolitan College to identify young people and become partners.</p> <p><u>Visit by New York legislators</u></p>
3.11	Members will be aware that the second Belfast Homecoming conference will take place in Titanic Belfast from 7 -10 October 2015. The event will attract around 150 key diaspora from the business, legislative and political world to hear about the development and investment opportunities in the city.
3.12	As part of the conference event, a group of 20 New York legislators and 10 prominent New York business and community leaders will visit the city and engage in a range of side meetings with key contacts.
3.13	Given the importance of the legislators group, it is proposed that a small dinner reception

is held for the group on the evening of 7 October. This will offer an opportunity to test out some of the preliminary work on the Belfast positioning activity and to promote the key city centre development opportunities. It will also help promote the narrative of Belfast as a city that is open for business and that is already home to a significant and growing stock of US-based investment.

Tech Mission 2016

- 3.14 Belfast City Council has supported, along with INI and NISP Connect, the two previous Northern Ireland Tech Missions (October 2013 and December 2014) which helped locally based businesses to develop and showcase themselves as part of a Northern Ireland contingent to San Francisco and Palo Alto. Participating businesses have traditionally been aligned to the creative and digital industry sector.
- 3.15 Tech Mission 2014 identified five new business leads, one new client was secured by a participant business, a collaborative project was developed between a business and US Department of Veterans Affairs and two companies expanded their operations in the US market. A comprehensive civic itinerary was also undertaken by the Lord Mayor who participated in the San Francisco element of the mission which further enhanced Belfast's position in the global marketplace and provided increased learning with regards to creative hubs, physical regeneration, engagement with NI diaspora, place positioning in the US market and citizen focused initiatives, for example tackling homelessness.
- 3.16 An opportunity exists for Council to support the Tech Mission in 2016, in partnership with Invest NI and NISP CONNECT. The suggested dates for the Tech Mission are 18 – 22 January 2016, with the proposed visit once again including Silicon Valley and San Francisco. The Trade Mission will include representatives from partner organisations and a delegation of up to 20 local tech companies. Businesses selected to participate on the mission will be through a competitive application process. An open call for applications will be issued by Invest NI to all tech companies in Northern Ireland and submissions will be scored by a panel made up of Council, Invest NI and NISP CONNECT. It should be noted that due to the fact Invest NI is assisting with the financial contribution to local companies, this does not guarantee all businesses will be based in Belfast.
- 3.17 The draft elements of the 2016 Tech Mission programme include:
- A “Creative Belfast” event held in San Francisco on the first day of the mission. This will be the Council's main business event of the mission and will be held in

	<p>partnership and financially supported by the Northern Ireland Bureau in Washington. The purpose of this event will be to provide participants with an opportunity to pitch and network with investors and companies from the area but will also act as a platform from which to promote Belfast as a world class hub for creativity and innovation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Delivery of a market access programme to participating companies prior to travel, to help identify key business contacts and opportunities on the west coast. Access to this support will also be available to other Belfast based creative digital businesses not participating on the 2016 mission, to help prepare them for potential attendance and future trade missions. – Opportunities for businesses to participate in a number of showcase events and a series of one to one meetings with potential clients based in the United States.
3.18	<p>As with the 2014 Tech Mission, it is recommended that the Lord Mayor of Belfast help lead the mission by hosting pitching and networking events for the delegation, accompanied by one member of staff. In addition, a civic programme will be developed and aligned to researching business incubation centres (Greenstart, Sandbox Suites and Matter Incubator), business development programmes (San Francisco Small Business Development Centre), Green/Clean Tech business growth initiatives and employability and skills programmes (San Francisco Platform to Employment P2E).</p>
3.19	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>It is estimated the Council participation will incur the following budgetary costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Boston – Belfast Youth Transformation Project - £40,000. – Sister Cities International Summit and programme - £10,000. – Visit by New York legislators – Welcome reception - £3,000. – Tech Mission - £10,000 (travel, accommodation and event hosting). The mission has secured \$10,000 financial commitment from The Northern Ireland Bureau in Washington to support the delivery of the “Creative Belfast” event. Invest NI have agreed to support up to 50% of travel and accommodation costs for the participating businesses and the delivery costs associated with the market access programme.
3.20	<p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>No specific equality or good relations implications.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached

4.1	None
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