



Subject:	Nashville Visit and Action Plan
Date:	9 th December 2015
Reporting Officer:	Donal Durkan, 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	The purpose of the report is to seek approval for an outward Nashville visit in March 2016 (11-16 March 2015).
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>It is recommended that the Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• agrees to the Nashville visit, with participation of the Lord Mayor and Chair of the Nashville Steering Group or their nominees, and the development of a 2015/16 action plan through the Nashville Steering Group. <p>A budget of £5,000 from the International Relations budget has been set aside for work on Nashville, including this visit.</p>

3.0	Main report
3.1	Members may be aware that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by the Mayor of Nashville and the Lord Mayor of Belfast in 1994 to promote cultural, tourism and business development opportunities between the two cities.
3.2	<p>There was limited activity in the early days due to limited resources locally and changes in the political environment in Nashville, but around 2010 there was renewed interest in expanding the link from local partners who had made some progress in developing their own bilateral links with partners in Nashville. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Staff exchanges, joint research and host visits between Queen’s University and Vanderbilt University – Establishing and building on the Belfast – Nashville Songwriters Festival – Participation in the annual Music Cities Irish Festival – Development of links between Ulster University and Google Fibre to facilitate exchange programmes – Development of links with Ulster and Belmond Universities – Exploration of healthcare links and conventions between the NI based EU Connected Health Alliance and the US Commercial Service – Exploration of partnerships between Visit Belfast and the Nashville Visitor and Convention Bureau.
3.3	The council convened a steering group of interested stakeholders including Ulster and Queen’s Universities, Invest NI, Visit Belfast, Tourism Ireland, Tourism NI, Generator NI, BBC and Belfast Nashville Songwriters. They agreed to a collective programme of activities covering a wide range of issues including education, economic development, genealogy and cultural tourism.
3.4	Individual partners have been working on their respective areas of collaboration such as QUB’s links with Vanderbilt University and the successful Belfast-Nashville Festival. The challenge has been to consider whether and how the Council can add value to those links and, as such, whether there needs to be a focus on exploring opportunities for additional links with Nashville and what the Council’s role should be in that regard.

3.5	<p>In September 2015, Nashville elected a new Mayor – Megan Barry. The Mayor’s Office has indicated an interest in exploring opportunities for further mutual linkages between Nashville and its partners, including Belfast. The Sister Cities lead in Nashville has been in regular contact and has confirmed that a delegation from Nashville will travel to Belfast before the Sister Cities Summit in Dublin (April 2016).</p>
3.6	<p>In order to establish relationships with the new Mayor and to help test out the new city positioning narrative to international markets, it is proposed that the Lord Mayor (or nominee) visits Nashville in early March 2016. Invitations may also be issued to partners (subject to them covering their own costs) to visit the city at the same time and maximise the impact of the Belfast presence in Nashville. The objectives of the Belfast City Council visit would be to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ascertain the political support for additional links between the cities – including exploring the potential resource commitment on the Nashville side to undertake trade missions and develop joint projects around tourism, healthcare and music – On the basis of this engagement, explore potential areas for collaboration for the coming year and beyond – Explore opportunities to profile Belfast as a cultural tourism destination in the Southern States and increase tourism revenue from this market – Promote Belfast’s investment message, as articulated through the place positioning work – Profile Belfast as a creative business location by engaging with the Belfast- Nashville Songwriters’ Showcase which will be broadcast to over 60 million homes in USA – Plan ahead for the visit to Belfast by Nashville partners in April 2016, as part of the Sister Cities network conference in Dublin.
3.7	<p>There are opportunities for engagement in and profiling at a number of significant events including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Music City’s Irish Festival on 12 March hosted with the Sister Cities and Mayor’s Office, profiling the creativity and vibrancy of Belfast. The Lord Mayor has been invited to attend a reception of delegates and music businesses and to work on incorporating a Belfast branded stage with Belfast musicians in future years. A Queen’s and Vanderbilt float for the festival is also being developed – Tourism Ireland’s tourism showcase event on the same day, profiling Belfast as a

<p>3.8</p>	<p>business and leisure tourism destination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Activities as part of the Belfast-Nashville Songwriters' Showcase, including events to be broadcast across USA. The Lord Mayor has been invited to be filmed at this with the Mayor of Nashville to introduce Belfast artists at the event. This programme will be broadcast to over 60million homes in the USA. <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>A budget of £5,000 from the International Relations budget has been set aside for the work on Nashville, including this visit. This will cover travel and accommodation costs for the Lord Mayor, Chair of the Nashville Steering Group, (or nominees) and one officer.</p>
<p>3.9</p>	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>No specific equality or good relations implications.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>None</p>