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| Subject: | BeITech Conference 2016 |
| Date: | 10 February 2016 |
| Reporting Officer: | Donal Durkan, Director of Development |
| Contact Officer: | Colin McCabrey, Economic Development Manager |

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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"/> |

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| 1.0 | Purpose of Report |
| 1.1 | The purpose of this report is to recommend a funding contribution of £10,000 towards the delivery of the Belfast Technology Conference 2016 (BeITech). |
| 2.0 | Recommendations |
| 2.1 | <p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Consider and approve the request for sponsorship to support the BeITech conference to be held in Belfast on 21–22 April 2016. <p>The requested contribution from Belfast City Council is £10,000 and would be met from the current Economic Development unit budgets.</p> |
| 3.0 | Main report |
| 3.1 | <p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Belfast City Council supported the inaugural Belfast Technology Conference event which took place in April 2014 and the second conference in April 2015. In both years, the sponsorship from the Council was £15,000.</p> |
| 3.2 | <p>The 2015 conference took place at Titanic Belfast and brought together tech and business leaders as well as politicians from Belfast, USA and Europe including Katy Atkinson, CoFounder Datasnap.io; Ian Loughran, COO Google Payments; John McDonnell,</p> |

CoFounder and CEO, Bitnet Technologies; Sean Owen, Big Data Expert, Cloudera and Christina Wallace, Director BridgeUp STEM, American Museum for Natural History, NYC.

3.3 The conference helped inform technology professionals and businesses of the emerging technologies and approaches that allow them to innovate and compete effectively at a global level. The conference also helped educate and inspire kids, parents and teachers about the potential of a career in Digital Technology, thereby building the NI digital skill base.

3.4 The 2016 conference will again be held at Titanic Belfast and will target technology professionals, tech business owners, potential business founders and post primary school children, teachers and university students.

3.5 Key themes for this year's conference include; Machine Learning, Internet of Things, Smart Environment and Software Engineering. Representatives from UC Berkeley, California and Uber have been invited as keynote speakers. To date 12 key speakers have been confirmed.

3.6 BelTech 2016 will run over 2 days and will feature the following:

21 April: Day 1 will focus on technology professionals and businesses, including sessions titled Starting a Tech Business and the Internet of Things. The Lord Mayor of Belfast will be invited to open the event and a global expert will present the initial session.

22 April: Day 2 will focus on Post Primary school children (aged 11 -18) and teachers. It will feature a mix of engaging technology demos and conversational sessions including career pathways and opportunities.

3.7 Kainos Education Awards in association with Go Berserk will take place in the afternoon of Day 2, which rewards school children who have created digital products/content through the Go Berserk initiative.

3.8 Throughout the 2 days an exhibition of leading NI and Global high tech organisations will run to allow attendees to get a more detailed understanding of the people, products and innovations featured in the Conference. Education providers such as Ulster University, Springvale and Workforce training will also be among the exhibitors to advise students.

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| 3.9 | <p>The overall aims and benefits of the Belfast Tech conference are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help attendees to gain an awareness of emerging technologies and practices that will improve effectiveness and career development. - Provide opportunities to interact with highly successful tech/business leaders and role models. - Help attendees to build personal networks and enhance career prospects. - Contribute to building a vibrant Technology community and culture in Belfast and NI. - Inform students and young people about the types of technology careers available, and to present successful role models in these fields. - Contribute to building a highly skilled STEM skill base in NI. - Develop awareness among key international companies of Belfast's capability as a source of technology talent. |
| 3.10 | <p>The finance requested from the Council is sponsorship of £10,000, a reduction of £5,000 from previous years. Sponsorship of the Belfast Technology Conference will provide Council the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Full page advertisement in conference brochure - Prime time positioning of Council logo on all materials (Inc website, press ads, marketing materials) - Inclusion in pre-event publicity and post event publicity - Relevant promotional material in delegate packs - Prime exhibition space and opportunity for additional displays throughout the venue. - Delegate passes. (Number to be agreed) - Opportunity for additional exhibition stand for Invest NI to promote innovation space across NI, in particular Forthriver Innovation Centre and North Foreshore. - Opportunity for additional exhibition stand for Enterprise NI to promote the "Go for it" business start programme. - Access to networking events for companies participating on BCC creative and digital industry programmes. - 10 post-primary schools expected to attend, representing 200 pupils from all areas of the City. |
| 3.11 | <p>Members will be aware the Council receives a large number of requests for sponsorship or</p> |

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| | <p>other forms of funding. At present, there is no objective framework for assessing the relevant merits of these requests and allocating a contribution that is commensurate with the return to the Council. Equally, there is no single sponsorship resource from which these requests are funded. Instead, the funding is found within existing departmental budgets. This process is currently under review. In interim, however, officers have considered this request and made the recommendation based on a range of considerations, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alignment with the emerging Place Positioning strategy, which presents the City as a dynamic, ambitious city that supports business innovation. - Alignment of activities towards the creative, digital and innovation aspirations of the City and strategic fit and timing to contribute to Council led programmes for the creative and digital sector. - Alignment of activities towards the pre-enterprise and business start agenda of the Council which transferred to Council from DETI under Local Government Reform. - Alignment of activities to promote key employability and skills aims. <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> |
| 3.12 | The total sponsorship requested is £10,000. |
| 3.13 | The 2015 BelTech conference received £21k public sector sponsorship (£15k BCC) from a range of partners, £22k sponsorship from private sector partners and £26,500 from income and own resources. The 2016 conference forecasts £12,500 public sector sponsorship (£10k BCC request), £10,500 sponsorship from private sector and £31,950 from income and own resources, demonstrating the organiser's business plan to reduce dependency on public funds and become self financing in the longer term. |
| 3.14 | If approved, the budget of £10k is to be met from within existing Economic Development unit budgets. |
| 3.15 | <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>No specific equality or good relations considerations.</p> |
| 4.0 | Appendices – Documents Attached |
| 4.1 | None |