



Subject:	International Relations: Stakeholder Group representation
Date:	10 August 2016
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
1.1	The purpose of the report is to secure agreement on political representation on a number of Stakeholder Groups focusing on international relations activity.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Note the work underway and the timing and development of a new International Relations Framework– Agree to invite the appointed consultants to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 14 September to discuss the draft framework and agree to wider engagement with the consultancy team, and organise a specific workshop for Members, in order to ensure that all views are reflected in the new framework– Agree to the re-configuration of a number of Stakeholder / Working Groups on international activity, as set out in 3.12, in order to move ahead with existing commitments and ensure partner buy-in to new activity.

3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>Members will be aware that, in 2012, the Development Committee approved the development of a new, three year International Relations Framework. This framework identified a number of priority markets that Council should focus on, as well as a series of key objectives and activities within each market. The focus was on education, business and cultural linkages, collaboration and promotion.</p>
3.2	<p>Given the convening role played by the Council, and its new powers in relation to economic development, and in recognition of the need to ensure that the linkages were multi-layered, a number of Stakeholder Groups were established. These involved key representatives from business, academia, government and tourism sectors, who were working in and interested in the respective markets. Stakeholder Groups generally met on a quarterly basis and focused on both information sharing and collaborative planning for key events and were effective in market delivery of a range of events and initiatives.</p>
3.3	<p>The Stakeholder Groups currently operational include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>Boston Stakeholder Group</i> – currently chaired by the previous Lord Mayor (has not met since May 2016) – <i>Nashville Stakeholder Group</i> – currently chaired by Councillor Carole Howard (nominated by Councillor Deirdre Hargey, as previous Chair of City Growth and Regeneration Committee). The group was also attended by Councillor Niall Ó Donnghaile and Alderman Guy Spence – <i>China Stakeholder Group</i> – no political representation. Chaired by EU & International Relations Manager – <i>India Stakeholder Group</i> – no political representation. Chaired by EU & International Relations Officer – <i>Friendship Four Planning Group</i> – previously chaired by former Lord Mayor. Planning work for November 2016 event underway. The current Lord Mayor has committed to Chair this group.
3.4	<p>In addition to these Stakeholder Groups, the EU Unit team previously brought together a cross-party grouping of Members to raise awareness of EU funding opportunities and policy issues. This led to opportunity for Council Members to represent Belfast on European panels on best practice policy approaches. This group</p>

	<p>has not met since 2015 due to the fact that decisions on the key EU Structural Funds had already been taken by central government (with the exception of the Peace IV programme which is managed separately).</p>
3.5	<p>Work is currently underway on the development of the new International Relations Framework. As part of the commission, the consultancy team will engage with a range of key partners to help advise on how the Council can add value to the work of a range of strategic partners in terms of its international relations work.</p>
3.6	<p>Members will be central to this consultation and engagement. While the consultancy team will engage directly with the Chair and Deputy Chair, as well as any other Members as required, it is proposed that the appointed consultants are invited to the September Committee and that a Members' workshop be convened to identify and agree priority areas of focus for the new framework. A draft framework is due to be in place in early September and the final document will be completed at the end of September, with a view to presenting this to the October meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.</p>
3.7	<p>Pending the outcome of the International Relations Framework, there are a number of existing commitments to which this Committee has agreed. These include Boston, Nashville and Shenyang Sister City Agreements and actions, as well as the MOU with Dublin and engagement in Eurocities. Likewise, recent visits to Sister Cities as well as visits to Belfast by our partner cities have generated a number of activities and it is critical that we engage with our local partners to ensure the effective delivery of these actions.</p>
3.8	<p>Some examples of ongoing BCC activity are as follows:</p> <p><u>Education</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – coordinating a group of schools, universities, Belfast Met College and Invest NI to look at developing an agreed approach to internationalising education to increase the number of foreign students to the city – working with the local Boarding Schools in Belfast to link to the Shenyang Education Bureau for attracting Chinese students – secured additional resources for the Confucius Institute in NI – coordinating work placements and an overseas stay in Belfast for three Nashville College students.

3.9

Tourism

- joined the World Tourism Cities Federation (WTCF) and will have the opportunity to promote Belfast, tourism business and leisure at the WTCF global events and bid to host one of these in coming years
- hosted, and is scheduled to further host, Chinese tour operators to promote Belfast as a destination in partnership with Tourism Ireland, Tourism NI and Visit Belfast
- facilitated a link between Visit Belfast and the Boston and Nashville Visitor and Convention Bureaus to exchange staff, information and opportunities to bid for conferences.

3.10

Business

- hosted and is scheduled to host groups of Chinese investors in partnership with Invest NI
- will host a business and education inward mission from Boston and Nashville from 13 – 18 October 2016 following the successful Sister Cities Summit held in Belfast and Dublin in April 2016.

3.11

Culture

- is working with the Nashville Music Hall of Fame founder to advise on the development and funding of the Belfast Cultural Hub
- is partner and co-host for the 2nd annual Friendship Four Festival of Ice on 24-26 November 2016
- has helped secure the first ever NCAA Basketball Tournament for Belfast in December 2017

3.12

It is therefore proposed that, in the absence of any substantial changes presented through the new International Relations Framework, the Stakeholder Groups are re-configured as follows:

- *USA Stakeholder Group*: to take on work previously led by Boston and Nashville groups, as well as wider US-based activity (e.g. inward and outward missions, participation in US events such as SXSW and the Technology Mission to the West Coast). It is proposed that the group be chaired by Chair of City Growth and Regeneration Committee or nominee. Co-Chair / Deputy Chair to be identified from partner organisations (e.g. British Council, universities, Belfast

Metropolitan College, US Consulate etc.).

- *China Stakeholder Group*: to focus on taking forward work on Shenyang Sister City agreement. Will also cover wider inward visits / outward promotional opportunities to and from China. To be chaired by Chair of City Growth and Regeneration Committee or nominee. Co-Chair / Deputy Chair to be identified from partner organisations. However, it should be noted that on occasion it will be important for the Lord Mayor to represent the Council if visits to China involve meetings with Mayors.
- *Friendship Four Planning Group*: to meet for purposes of planning the international profiling element of the event. Lord Mayor to convene these meetings as required. This will be a time-limited planning group focused on the lead-in to the event. Its agenda will also align with the work of the wider USA stakeholder meeting.
- *India Stakeholder Group*: group to be kept under review and meet on an as-needs basis, chaired by the EU & International Relations Team. Should the group become more active it is proposed that it is chaired by the Chair of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee or nominee. Co-Chair / Deputy Chair to be identified from partner organisations.
- *EU Funding Group*: it is proposed that a review of EU funding opportunities is undertaken in light of the 23 June referendum to establish the viability of any future engagement forum on EU funding. In the meantime, officers continue to have access to relevant policy and funding information and can provide this to Members, as required.

3.13 In addition to engagement in the relevant Stakeholder Groups, it is important that Members are engaged in the various international events and activities undertaken by the Council and its partners. Members have identified the need for more regular updates on international activity and this can be done through regular (quarterly) reporting at Committee. Likewise, it is important that relevant political leads (Chair / Deputy Chair of Committee and Lord Mayor if appropriate) can engage with international delegations, in line with relevant protocol.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.14 There are no specific financial or resource implications at this stage. Committee approval is already in place for a number of key activities (e.g. Friendship Four). Any new activities identified as part of the framework review will be taken account of in

	<p>the new financial estimates and brought to Committee for approval, within the context of the new International Relations Framework.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p>
3.15	The new International Relations Framework will be equality screened.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
4.1	None