



Subject:	International Relations Framework 2016-2021 - Update on development and approval for international activities
Date:	9 November 2016
Reporting Officer:	Donal Durkan, Director of Development
Contact Officer:	Laura Leonard, European & International Relations Manager

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 update Members on the development of the International Relations Framework for the period 2016-2021 and seek approval to proceed with a number of forthcoming activities.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Agree the content of the new International Relations Framework 2016-2021.– Agree to support the Chinese New Year 2017 celebrations to a maximum of £5,000.– Agree to the attendance of the Lord Mayor and the Director of Development or their nominees at the Boston launch of the third Friendship Four Ice Hockey 2017 tournament from 5 - 8 January 2017, at a cost not to exceed £3,500.– Agree to support the first Sport Changes Life US / NI Basketball tournament in Belfast in December 2017 at a maximum cost of £50,000, and thereafter support the tournament in principle for successive years, subject to annual committee and budget approval.– Agree to the development of a 'Belfast in China Week' programme to take place in partnership with stakeholder organisations in the first six months of 2017, subject to

	<p>Committee approval of the programme and associated budget.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Agree to the development of a Belfast City Council economic, tourism and education mission to Nashville in partnership with key stakeholder organisations in Spring 2017, subject to Committee approval of the programme and associated budget.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Members will be aware that in 2012, the Development Committee approved the development of a new three year International Relations Framework 2012-2015. The aim of the Framework was to promote Belfast on the international stage as a place to visit, study, invest and do business.
3.2	Since 2012, the Council has engaged in a number of strategic international partnerships, namely with Boston, Nashville and Shenyang, along with increasing collaboration with Dublin and London. These engagements have involved not only the Council but also its partner organisations, thereby ensuring that the relationships are multi-dimensional.
3.3	With new Planning powers already in place and Regeneration powers expected to transfer to Councils in the coming years, and with a significant endorsement of the commitment to “Growing the Belfast Economy” as articulated in the Belfast Agenda, the Council is increasing its ambition around positioning the city to attract international investment from developers, FDI and institutional investment. It is also supportive of work being undertaken by partner organisations to increase the number of international students in the city, grow tourism investment and support more Foreign Direct Investment as well as helping local businesses to become more active in international export markets.
3.4	In recognition of the need to create more focus and ensure added value of the Council investment in this area, a new International Relations Framework 2016 - 2021 has been under development since August 2016. As part of the commission, the consultancy team engaged with a range of key internal and external partners to identify the appropriate focus, structure and priorities for the Council’s investment in this field. A Members’ workshop on the draft Framework was held on 26 October 2016.
3.5	A copy of the draft Framework is attached as Appendix 1 . Some of the emerging principles and areas of focus identified include:

- Need to clarify the role of the Council: The value that Belfast City Council can play in international relations has been consistently articulated by our City partners: it amplifies the work of others and plays a critical convening and leadership role that opens up opportunities and access to influence on a scale that is beyond what our partners would be able to achieve working unilaterally.
- Positioning the City: importance of the collective message. Belfast has a range of audiences to speak to in international markets, from potential investors to students and tourists. While the message needs to be targeted to the respective audiences, it is critical that this is underpinned by a shared, compelling narrative. All opportunities to take a “Team Belfast” approach in relevant activities should be explored.
- Strengthening our relationships with key partners and locations: The existing City linkages appear to align well with those of our key partners. It appears prudent to explore opportunities for deeper engagement in a small number of key locations, as opposed to light touch engagement with a larger number of locations.
- Objectively assessing new opportunities: The new Framework includes a methodology to effectively assess the value of any new linkages to the Council and our stakeholders. This approach should be endorsed.
- Promoting trade and investment opportunities as a key area of focus: Belfast has achieved great success in attracting inward investment jobs in recent years. Our recent attendance at MIPIM is an example of where the Council can work with partners to promote Belfast’s investment opportunities to a global audience. Maximising future opportunities to attract investors is paramount to growing our city and this will require a planned, targeted, concerted and collaborative effort alongside a number of our partners.
- Attracting Visitors and creating positive perceptions of the city: It is important that we develop a marketing strategy that sells the city to students, conference operators and leisure visitors. Once visitors come to the city, we must ensure that Belfast provides a rich, positive experience through our culture, arts, leisure and events provision so that visitors leave with a positive experience and a desire to return
- Ensuring Transparency and Communicating Success

We need to be clear about the objectives of both inward and outward visits involving Councillors and Officers and the level of investment needs to be commensurate with the potential return to the city and its partner organisations. There is a need for multi-annual planning for the city-to-city links as well as our wider international promotion

	<p>activity. These multi-annual plans should have clear targets attached and, at the end of each year, successes should be communicated.</p>
3.6	<p>Taking account of these emerging principles, there are a number of activities in the pipeline which are considered to align well with the emerging direction of travel. While recognising the need to take a multi-annual approach to the planning of activities within the International Relations Framework, these activities require Council endorsement in order to commence the development work required. If approved, they will feature in wider multi-annual programmes of activity which will be brought back to this Committee for information and endorsement, as appropriate.</p>
3.7	<p>The emerging priority activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chinese New Year 2017 - Friendship Four Ice Hockey Festival November 2017 - Sport Changes Life (SCL) Victory Scholar Basketball Programme - Belfast in China week - Future Nashville visit programme.
3.8	<p><u>Chinese New Year 2017</u></p> <p>Members will be aware that since 2012, Belfast City Council has been supporting the City celebrations for the annual Chinese New Year. Each year the Confucius Institute along with the Chinese Consulate work with other strategic partners to bring famous traditional dance and art troupes from China to promote the beauty of traditional Chinese Culture in Belfast. A request has been received to support the 2017 Chinese New Year Guangzhou Art Troupe event in the Waterfront Hall on 1 February. The troupe will include puppet art theatre, music and folk art. The event will bring senior officials from the Chinese Embassy in London and the Chinese Consul General for Northern Ireland, senior officials from Ulster University, MLAs, and Mayors from various councils, together with over 3,000 people including students from the hub schools, parents, teachers and the general public.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Friendship Four Ice Hockey Festival 2017</u></p> <p>Members will be aware that Belfast City Council has been a central support partner of the Friendship Four Ice Hockey tournament. The second tournament will take place in the SSE Arena from 25-27 November 2016 with teams from Quinnipiac, St Lawrence, Massachusetts and Vermont Universities. It is expected to attract 1,200 US visitors over the weekend, contributing almost £1million in visit spend to the Belfast economy.</p>

3.10	<p>Work is already at an advanced stage on the third annual Friendship Four tournament in Belfast (November 2017) and the organisers are planning to formally announce the dates as well as participating teams at an event to take place in Boston in January 2017.</p>
3.11	<p>The Lord Mayor and the Director of Development have been invited to attend the official launch of the tournament in Boston on 7 January 2017. This will be a national US press launch along with Mayor Walsh of Boston. It will be instrumental in promoting the tournament to increase the number of US visitors to Belfast in 2017 and to enhance the profile of the event. It will also present a significant opportunity to promote the city of Belfast as a cultural, tourist and business destination.</p>
3.12	<p>Members are asked to approve the attendance of the Lord Mayor and Director of Development or their nominees at the launch in Boston. As part of this visit, there will be a number of additional meetings organised with a view to putting in place the plans for a potential inward business mission to Belfast from Boston in late Spring 2017. If this goes ahead, it will feature as part of the future work plan and will be brought to this Committee for endorsement. The costs associated with this visit will not exceed £3,500.</p>
3.13	<p><u>Sport Changes Life (SCL) Victory Scholar Basketball Programme</u></p> <p>Members may be aware that Sport Changes Life (SCL) is a sport-based charity that seeks to raise the aspirations of young people by promoting sporting excellence, vocational and academic achievement and personal development. It runs a number of outreach and engagement initiatives including the e-Hoops programme (which is to be supported under the Council's Employability and Skills Framework) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes for local businesses.</p>
3.14	<p>One of the charity's most significant programmes is the Victory Scholar initiative. This is run by SCL in partnership with Ulster University and brings US-based College student athletes to Ireland to study for a Master's degree and to work with disadvantaged youth as part of their programme. At present, twenty-three Victory Scholars are attending 10 Universities and Institutes of Technology throughout Ireland. Scholars work in structured settings with young people deemed to be at risk in society. In the course of 2016, it is anticipated that the Victory Scholars will work with over 60,000 young people through sports and personal development programmes. It is also intended to explore the development of a reciprocal programme to secure scholarships from Northern Ireland students in US colleges.</p>

3.15	<p>The networks established in the course of the 10 years that the Victory Scholars programme has been operational can provide significant contacts within many US corporations and across numerous prestigious US educational establishments. Furthermore, the alumni network of Victory Scholars who have spent some time in Northern Ireland can act as very positive Ambassadors for the region and can encourage further partnerships from their institutions.</p>
3.16	<p>Building on the work of the Victory Scholars programme to date, SCL are currently planning the first ever Northern Ireland-US College Classic in partnership with the US Basketball Hall of Fame. This is a first for US College teams to take part in competitive games outside of the USA.</p>
3.17	<p>Discussions are already under way with Ulster University with a view to the university becoming a strategic partner in the event. The Basketball Hall of Fame in the US has been confirmed as a partner and support from the Rory Foundation has also been secured. The organisers are also engaging with other potential funders in order to cover the costs associated with hosting the event.</p>
3.18	<p>At this stage, it is proposed that the 2017 event will attract four teams while it is planned that 8 teams will participate in the 2018 and 2019 events (the organisers are currently working on a three year planning schedule). The organisers are open to engaging with our partner cities of Nashville and Boston in order to ensure that there is representation from both cities.</p>
3.19	<p>The 2017 event will attract up to 30 players from each team along with officials, family and friends. Organisers are forecasting that the event will support around 2000 bednights, representing an income of around £400,000 for the local hospitality industry. It is proposed that it will take place in the SSE Arena and will be broadcast both locally and in USA. Organisers will work with Visit Belfast and Invest NI to ensure that all opportunities are taken to promote the city as a dynamic business and visitor destination.</p>
3.20	<p>It is proposed that the Council provides funding of up to £40,000 towards the cost of hosting the event along with provision of a civic welcome dinner at a maximum cost of £10,000. The organisers are also seeking support from US and NI-based corporate sponsors as well as other public bodies. There will also be revenue generated by income from ticket sales for the matches.</p>

	<p><u>Belfast in China Week</u></p> <p>3.21 Members will recall that the Lord Mayor and officers from Belfast City Council took part in a mission to China in May 2016. Other attendees included both universities, Invest NI, the NI Executive Office and local businesses. Partners undertook their own programme of meetings to pitch for international students, business and investment, in both Beijing and Shenyang. Thanks largely to the efforts of the NI Chinese Consul General, Madam Wang, the ‘Friendly Cooperation’ agreement with the city of Shenyang and Belfast was elevated to that of a formal Sister City Agreement.</p> <p>3.22 The strong message coming from the British and Irish Embassies, as well as UKTI and the NI Executive Office, is that relationships need to be fostered over time to produce concrete outputs.</p> <p>3.23 Since the May visit there has been a significant increase in engagement with China. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Belfast City Council has begun an exchange of information and best practice with Shenyang on Smart Cities – Campbell College is actively engaging with the China Education Bureau to recruit Chinese students to board at the College – Visit Belfast has become proactive in the World Tourism Cities Federation to promote the city to a massive Chinese audience – Progress has been made to encourage a direct flight from Dublin to Beijing – QUB and Ulster University are progressing agreements for research and international student programmes – Confucius has secured an additional 12 Mandarin teachers for NI – Belfast City Council been working with Shenyang on a large scale exhibition to be launched in the city next year to promote its Sister Cities linkages – Belfast has been invited to send a cultural performance to Shenyang for a major cultural festival in 2018 and is working with Confucius, Arts Council and British Council to make this happen – Belfast City Council has undertaken a number of follow-up sales pitches for city investment with investor contacts engaged with during the May visit. <p>3.24 In order to further progress with tangible areas of cooperation and to build on the momentum created by the visit and subsequent activity, Members are asked to give approval for Officers to explore and develop a further visit – ‘Belfast in China Week’ in May or June 2017 to be led by the Lord Mayor, in conjunction with city partners. Subject to Committee approval, officers</p>
--	--

	will commence work on the development of a detailed programme and this will be presented at a later date for Committee approval.
3.25	<p><u>Nashville Mission</u></p> <p>Members will be aware of the Council's March 2016 visit to Nashville led by the former Lord Mayor. The programme for the visit included meetings with Vanderbilt and Belmont universities, as well as the music industry and economic development stakeholders.</p>
3.26	<p>Belfast City Council, jointly with Invest NI, held a pitching session with companies from Nashville from the health technologies and creative industries sectors, both the main growth sectors driving the Nashville economy. Since this visit, the City of Nashville has led two missions to Belfast, one during the April Sister City Summit 2016 along with Boston, and the latter, during the October Sister Cities mission and Homecoming conference.</p>
3.27	<p>Immediately after the Homecoming event, the Chair of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, along with the Director of Development, travelled to Boston to hold a health technologies business showcase with Belfast, Boston and Nashville companies.</p>
3.28	<p>Since the March 2016 visit to Nashville, there has been significant progress on the Belfast-Nashville partnerships:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Officers are currently following up live contacts and requests for linkages between Ulster and Queen's universities with Nashville around creative industries and emerging technologies – Both universities are in discussions with Nashville universities around student placements – One school exchange has taken place (October 2016 with Methody) with a further two visits planned for 2017 – Visit Belfast is now exploring opportunities to link with its Nashville equivalent around joint tourism promotion under the Sister Cities banner.
3.29	<p>In order to maintain and build momentum, and to build a multi-annual work programme between the cities, Members are asked to give approval for Officers to explore and develop a programme for a further visit to Nashville in late Spring early Summer 2017. The programme would include tourism, business and education dimensions in partnership with stakeholders in order to progress the existing connections. Final approval on the details of the visit will be brought to a future meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee</p>

	for endorsement.
	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
3.30	<u>International Relations Framework</u> Committee approval is already in place for the development of a new International Relations Framework, within the existing unit budget. Any new activities identified as part of the framework review will be taken account of in the new financial estimates and brought to Committee for approval.
	<u>Chinese New Year 2017</u>
3.31	Belfast City Council has been asked to provide £5,000 in support of the event on 1 February 2017.
	<u>Friendship Four Ice Hockey</u>
3.32	The cost of the visit to Boston by the Lord Mayor and Director of Development or their nominees for the launch of the 2017 Friendship Four event as well as the series of business meetings will not exceed £3,500.
	<u>Basketball</u>
3.33	The maximum cost of supporting the inaugural US Basketball Victory Scholar tournament in Belfast will not exceed £50,000.
	<u>Belfast in China Week</u>
3.34	The anticipated cost of the Belfast City Council led 'Belfast in China Week' will not exceed £25,000. Costs for this activity will be included within the 2017/2018 departmental estimates, and are subject to Council approval.
	<u>Nashville</u>
3.35	The anticipated cost of a Belfast City Council mission to Nashville is £10,000. Costs for this activity will be included within the 2017/2018 departmental estimates, and are subject to Council approval.
	<u>Equality & Good Relations Implications</u>
3.36	The new International Relations Framework will be equality screened and all proposed activity will be embedded within this.

4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
4.1	Appendix 1 – Draft International Relations Framework