



<b>Subject:</b>	Request to Present - Visit Belfast
<b>Date:</b>	7 December 2016
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Donal Durkan, Director of Development
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Lisa Toland, Head of Economic Initiatives & International Development

<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to request Committee approval to invite representatives from Visit Belfast to attend a future meeting of the Committee in order to present their business plan for the 2017/18 financial year and to set out their request for financial support from the Council in the coming financial year.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>agree to a presentation from Visit Belfast at a future meeting (date to be agreed).</li></ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	Members will be aware that Visit Belfast is the principal Destination Management and Marketing Organisation for the city of Belfast.
3.2	The organisation provides a range of visitor servicing facilities at the Welcome Centre on Donegall Square North as well as at the two airports. They have also introduced new touch screen information points at key locations including the two airports and train stations in the city as well as the new Eastside Visitor Centre.

3.3	<p>Visit Belfast leads on the tourism marketing activities in Belfast. Working in conjunction with private sector partners and with other organisations such as the Belfast Chamber and the Belfast One BID, they organise seasonal campaigns to increase visitor numbers and maximise visitor spend in the city.</p>
3.4	<p>Visit Belfast also delivers a range of activities to secure business tourism investment in the city. This includes a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Belfast Waterfront to set out the roles of the respective organisations. There have been significant successes in this field in this regard, and business events and conferences taking place in the city last financial year delivered an annual return of £40million.</p>
3.5	<p>Visit Belfast is a public/private partnership. Its current Chairman is Howard Hastings OBE from the Hastings Hotel Group. Belfast City Council has four Councillor representatives on the Board: Cllr Arder Carson, Cllr Deirdre Hargey, Cllr Emmet McDonough-Brown and Alderman Guy Spence.</p>
3.6	<p>The tourism and hospitality sector in Belfast is expected to become one of the largest employers in the city in the coming years. Forecasts suggest that the sector will account for around 15% of new jobs in the coming decade. One of the key growth areas is in hotel accommodation: there have been ten planning applications approved since the transfer of planning powers to the Council. While this will address the current shortages in the market, our analysis identifies the need for an additional 1500 bed spaces to meet the growing demand.</p>
3.7	<p>Visit Belfast is focusing on growing overnight stays as well as servicing the day trippers to the city. Members will be aware that the Tourism Strategy identifies the target of doubling the value of tourism in Belfast by 2020. This is likely to require additional investment in international markets for both leisure and business tourism. Visit Belfast is currently looking at the implications of these targets for its work and its presentation to Committee will take account of how it plans to refocus its operating model in order to maximise the return on investment and capitalise on emerging areas of opportunity.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Financial and resource implications</u></p> <p>In the current financial year, Belfast City Council's funding to Visit Belfast is £1,827,465. This figure with no uplift has also been built into the proposed revenue estimates for 2017/18 at this stage.</p>

3.9	<u>Equality or good relations implications</u> No specific equality or good relations implications.
4.0	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	None