



Subject:	International Relations – Boston Update
Date:	9 August 2017
Reporting Officer:	Donal Durkan, Director of Development
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Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	
After Council Decision	
Some time in the future	
Never	

Call-in	
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: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Update Members on International Relations activity over the summer period, focusing on the city of Boston, and to seek approval for Members' participation in an October outward mission to Boston in October 2017.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Note recent developments with respect to the Belfast-Boston Sister City relationship;– Agree to the attendance of the Lord Mayor and the Chair of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, or their nominees along with one Officer on an outward mission to Boston, during the week of 16–20 Oct 2017. The cost of this visit will not

	exceed £5,000.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p><u>Boston Outward Visit</u></p> <p>Members will recall that, in March 2017, the City Growth and Regeneration Committee approved a new International Relations Framework for the period 2016-2021. Members will be aware that this Framework delivers primarily on the formal relationships already in existence through the Sister City Agreements with Shenyang, Boston and Nashville, the Memorandum of Understanding with Dublin, and developing relationships with London.</p>
3.2	<p>This March Committee report also included an annual action plan outlining upcoming events, projects and key opportunities for collaboration with city partners to promote Belfast on the international stage as a place to visit, study, work and do business. This plan included details of a proposed Belfast visit to Boston in the current financial year, subject to agreement with partner organisations.</p>
3.3	<p>Members will be aware that a cross-cutting and high profile delegation from Boston visited the city in June 2017. This visit marked the third anniversary of the signing of the Sister City agreement between Boston and Belfast – the first Sister City agreement signed by Mayor Walsh when he came into office. The delegation comprised senior representatives from a number of fields, including further and higher education, arts and culture and urban regeneration. In addition to meetings with elected members, the representatives also engaged in one-to-one meetings with their Belfast-based counterparts to either explore new areas of collaboration or to build on existing relationships and review how these could move to the next level.</p>
3.4	<p>In advance of the proposed outward visit, Belfast City Council will also host both Boston and Nashville in a joint inward mission from 4 – 6 October 2017. While details of the delegations from both cities are currently being finalised, it is expected that up to 60 representatives across both cities will be in Belfast at that time. In order to maximise the value of the inward visit and to ensure the appropriate level of civic welcome, Members of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee will be invited to meet the delegates on a number of occasions over the three days. Further details on the draft programme will be brought back to the September meeting of this Committee and invitations to the respective events will be circulated as appropriate.</p>

3.5	<p>In order to maintain momentum on the Boston link, an outward mission is scheduled for Autumn. Having spoken to Mayor Walsh's officials, it is recommended that BCC undertakes this visit during the week of 16 – 20 Oct 2017, to coincide with the Boston Women's Entrepreneurs week. The City of Boston is keen to identify areas of business collaboration as the next focus of activity under Sister Cities. Having undertaken engagement with local partners and building on an understanding of the emerging opportunities already in the pipeline, it is proposed that the focus of the mission will also be on a number of other priority themes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism promotion and development: Building on the opportunity created by the new direct air route by Norwegian Airlines, it is proposed that a tourism showcase event will take place. The Council will work with its strategic partners including Visit Belfast and Tourism Ireland to ensure that the messaging and city proposition is in place and also to secure interest from Boston-based partners interested in promoting Belfast as both a leisure and business tourism destination. • Exploring the opportunities to collaborate in the field of Life and Health Sciences: Last year, Belfast hosted a joint meeting in Boston of companies operating in this field from Boston, Nashville and Belfast. There are opportunities to expand on this initial engagement and to explore opportunities for local companies to become involved in new export markets. • Co-hosting a cyber security event to explore potential cooperation in this sector. • Reinforcing the civic linkages: Mayor Walsh is coming to the end of his first term in office and will be working on his campaign to stand for another term. Given that his first international engagement was with Belfast when he was appointed Mayor, he is keen to review Sister City activity and outputs to date and set the agenda for ongoing engagement between the two cities.
3.6	<p>Staff within the International Relations Unit have commenced initial programme planning with Boston for a mission in the week of 16 – 20 October, and will develop a full programme of events which will reflect the strategic priorities of the International Relations Framework and link the delegation with key city stakeholders in the areas identified above.</p>
3.7	<p>Members will be aware that Boston is one of the three Sister Cities with which Belfast is linked. Members have previously asked that they are kept up to speed with progress and outcomes of International Relations work. A six-monthly update report will be presented to the Committee in September 2017.</p>

3.8	Members are asked to agree to the participation of the Lord Mayor, Chair of City Growth and Regeneration Committee or their respective nominees and one Officer on the above programme for this activity which will be met through the International Unit budget.
3.9	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> There are no additional financial and resource implications.
3.10	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u> No specific equality or good relations implications.
4.0	Appendices
	None