Subject:	BelTech Conference 2018
Date:	7 February 2018
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Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?　　　　　　　　　　**Yes** [ ]　**No** [X]

    If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

        After Committee Decision [ ]
        After Council Decision [ ]
        Sometime in the future [ ]
        Never [ ]

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?　　　　　**Yes** [X]　**No** [ ]

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to recommend a funding contribution of £6,000 from the agreed economic development budget (reduced from the previous year) towards the delivery of the Belfast Technology Conference 2018 (BelTech).
2.0	**Recommendations**
	The Committee is asked to:
	• Consider and approve the request for sponsorship of £6,000 to support the BelTech conference to be held in Belfast on 3-4 May 2018.

3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u> Members will be aware that one of the key priorities of the Belfast Agenda is Growing the Economy. Central to this pillar of activity is the commitment to increase business start-up, build support for business growth and encourage additional investment in the City.
3.2	Belfast's economic growth in recent years has been driven by technology-focused businesses operating across a range of sectors. These companies are both FDI businesses and small, indigenous companies that are developing products and services here that are being exported worldwide or have the potential to do so.
3.3	Over the course of the last few years, there have been a number of annual tech-focused business conferences and events that have sought to showcase best practice, encourage collaboration between businesses and encourage young people to become engaged in the tech sector. The growing support for the Smart City Agenda means that the Council and the City are now looking at technology not only as a business product but also as a way of changing the way we all do business.
3.4	Belfast City Council supported the inaugural Belfast Technology Conference event which took place in April 2014 and the subsequent conferences in April 2015, 2016 and 2017. Sponsorship from the Council was reduced from £15,000 to £10,000 in 2016 and £8,000 in 2017 with the view to reducing the reliance on Council funding each year as the conference grows and becomes self-sustaining.
3.5	The 2017 conference took place over the course of 3 days at Titanic Belfast and brought together technology and business leaders from around the globe to showcase emerging technologies to support the industry to innovate and compete effectively at a global level.
3.6	The 2017 conference also helped educate and inspire the next generation by engaging with school children, parents and teachers about the potential of a career in digital technology.
3.7	BelTech 2017 attracted a total of 650 attendees, which is an increase of 250 since its inception in 2014. Around 250 of these were technology professionals and 400 were students. 2017 was the first year that the event trialled two stages with a technology theme.

	Whilst one focused on Software Engineering only, the other featured discussions on Internet of Things (IOT), Immersive Tech and Cyber Security.	
3.8	The 2018 conference will be held at the new BelTel Print Hall (the old Belfast Telegraph building) and will target technology professionals, technology business owners and potential funders as well as post primary school children, teachers and university students.	
3.9	We are currently working with the Department of the Economy and Digital Catapult UK, to develop space within the BelTel building as a hub for the Digital and Immersive Technology sectors and the city.	
3.10	Housing the Beltech 2018 Conference in the BelTel Building will add value to and support our ambition for the building and the wider Cathedral Quarter area.	
3.11	Key thematic areas for this year's conference include informing technology professionals and businesses of the emerging technologies and approaches that will allow them to innovate and compete effectively at a global market. As well as this the conference will also educate and inspire students and teachers about the potential of a career in technology, thereby building the digital skill base and reinforcing Belfast's global lead in this area.	
3.12	BelTech 2018 will run over 2 days and will feature the following: • 3 May: Day 1 will focus on technology professionals and businesses and will feature curated conversations on User Experience, Artificial Intelligence, Immersive Technology, Software Engineering, Smart Cities and Cyber Security. An audience of 300 is expected on this day. • 4 May: Day 2 is aimed at attracting 400 post primary school children and teachers and will feature a mix of engaging technology demonstrations, safety in using social media and a discussion of career pathways and opportunities. • 4 May: On the evening of 4 May, the BelTech 50 awards will take place in order to highlight the success of the technology talent here in Belfast. This is expected to attract 200 attendees. • Exhibition: 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 covered in the Conference. Education providers will	

	also be among the exhibitors to advise students.
3.13	The overall aims and benefits of the BelTech conference include: • Gaining an awareness of emerging technologies and practices that will improve participants' effectiveness and career development • Interacting with highly successful tech/business leaders and role models • Building personal networks and enhancing career prospects • Contributing to building a vibrant technology community and culture in Belfast and NI that can compete effectively on a global scale • Contributing to the NI Innovation Strategy • Informing students and young people about the types of technology careers available and advising them on routes into employment • Inspiring students and young people by successful role models and their stories • Supporting teachers to provide quality careers guidance and advice on future employment opportunities for students in this field • Developing awareness among key international companies of Belfast capability as a source of technology talent.
3.14	The finance requested from Council is £6,000, a reduced amount to the previous year. Sponsorship of the event will provide Council the following: • Speaking roles for the Lord Mayor, CEO and for a representative of the council on the Smart Cities panel • Full page advertisement in conference magazine • Primetime positioning of BCC logo on all materials including website and all promotional materials • Prime exhibition space • Permission to display unlimited company marketing stands at the venue • Included in pre and post event publicity • 10 delegate passes • Sponsorship of an award at the BelTech Awards • 10 tickets for the awards
3.15	It is proposed that the delegate passes will be offered to local technology businesses on our Venture for Success and Creative Industries programmes. A number of Council Officers will also attend to staff the exhibition stand. Should Members wish to attend the event, they should advise Officers and arrangements can be made to enable them to do so.

3.16	Members will be aware that Business Support activities delivered by the Council's Economic Development Unit concentrate primarily on starting a business, growing a business and investing in Belfast as well as supporting Employability and Skills. The range of initiatives delivered are developed based on research and engagement with partners to identify what will make the most significant contributions to the outcomes set out in the Belfast Agenda.
3.17	In addition to programme activity, Council's Economic Development Unit identifies opportunities to engage with local events, such as BelTech, that are aligned to the Council's strategic priorities. These events act as a pipeline of enquiries and clients to avail of Council led business support programmes.
3.18	Financial & Resource Implications The total budget requested is £6,000 which will be met from Economic Development Budgets. This has already been set aside as part of the 2018/19 estimates.
3.19	Organisers are forecasting an additional £50,000 in sponsorship from other private and public sector partners. They consider that, in the longer-term, the event will become self-funding.
3.20	Equality or Good Relations Implications No specific equality or good relations considerations.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	None