



Subject:	International Relations Update and Action Plan 2018/2019
Date:	07 March 2018
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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	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Update Members on the delivery of the International Relations Framework, focusing on activity over the last six months since September 2017– Seek approval for the delivery of the 2018/2019 Action Plan.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Note the range of activities and associated outputs of International Relations actions

	<p>over the course of the second half of this financial year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Approve the International Relations Action Plan outlining activity and budgetary commitments for 2018/2019, as set out in sections 3.7-3.12.
3.0	Main report
3.1	Members will recall the November 2016 approval of a new International Relations Framework for the period 2016 - 2021.
3.2	The aim of this Framework is to continue to promote Belfast on the international stage with other stakeholders as a place to invest, work, visit and study. The Framework will deliver primarily on the formal relationships already in existence through our Sister City Agreements with Shenyang, Boston and Nashville, and developing relationships with Dublin, and with the City of London. New areas of opportunity will be considered on their merits and relevance to Belfast.
3.3	Members will be aware that, at the 13 September 2017 meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, an update report on International Relations activity for the previous six months was presented and the outline plans for the coming period were set out for endorsement. This report provides an update on the activities and associated outcomes over the six-month period from October 2017 to March 2018, and outlines an Action Plan for international activity and associated costs for 2018/2019. These activities have, for the most part, been led by Belfast City Council working in partnership with stakeholders in government, education, tourism, business, culture, legal sector and sport.
3.4	<p>Members will be aware that the International Relations activity set out in this report focuses principally on our focused relationships with our Sister Cities and partner cities. The Council is also involved in a range of additional engagement activity in international markets. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Support for Visit Belfast to promote the city as a vibrant tourism destination – for both leisure and business tourists. The Council investment in additional conference and exhibition space at Belfast Waterfront has meant that the venue is now able to attract additional national and international conferences and events – thereby increasing visitor numbers from new markets. – Promoting the City for international real estate investment: a Council-led delegation will take part in the annual European property investment showcase in Cannes in March 2018 – MIPIM. The public-private partnership will promote the City as an

investment location, focusing on attracting both investors and end-users in the key FDI sectors as well as hospitality and international education and training opportunities

- Supporting local companies to export and develop an international presence: Members will be aware of the City's presence at the annual music, digital and convergence event in Austin, Texas – SXSW. The Lord Mayor will lead a delegation of local businesses and musicians and will host a number of promotional events to showcase the best of 'Creative Belfast'. Through our business support, we are also helping local companies to access new export markets and to develop new products and services in order to enhance their competitiveness.

3.5 This range of activity is delivered in collaboration with Council's Private and Public Stakeholders represented on the various stakeholder groups set up to support international framework delivery. This includes key agencies such as Invest NI. **Appendix 1** outlines some of the key activities and outputs for the last six months. By their nature, these activities often take some time to deliver on outcomes so it can be difficult to track the impact of the Council's investment over a short period. However, through our partnerships and stakeholder arrangements, we have taken a collective approach to developing linkages and activities in our priority areas of focus and have a shared investment in activities. In the coming year we will improve how we demonstrate outcomes on business tourism and education.

3.6 With regard to the key activities for 2018/2019, it is proposed that these will be driven by a number of the priority outcomes set out in the Belfast Agenda. Activities will be assessed in order to consider how they can deliver on these outcomes before making investment decisions. The key outcomes will contribute to the 'Growing the Economy' theme of the Belfast Agenda. The Council's national and international relationships are also an important foundation for the developing City Deal, harvesting investment and collaboration for skills, innovation and infrastructure. Outcomes will focus on:

- Building the City's position as a magnet for FDI
- Maximising the City's connections worldwide to drive growth
- Positioning the City internationally as a key tourism, education and business destination
- Helping local companies to internationalise their business and increase business connections and exports

While many of the activities are still under development, it is proposed that the 2018/2019

3.7	<p>Action Plan will focus on the following priority areas in order to maximise the return on investment, given the limited resources available:</p>
3.8	<p><u>China/Shenyang</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Development work to support the delivery of a Belfast/Shenyang tourism showcase in Shenyang. The opportunity for this event was identified during the China-UK Summit held in Belfast in December 2017. An indicative date of September 2018 has been set for this event, subject to agreement with relevant partner organisations, including Tourism Ireland and Visit Belfast. The costs associated with this event will not exceed £25,000 – Ongoing support to the Chinese Consulate Team to support relevant civic or political visits – Supporting additional engagement by the local tourism industry in the “China Ready” programme – helping them to benefit from the growing visitor numbers from China. Tourism Ireland estimates that there were around 65,000 Chinese visitors to Ireland in 2016 and this number has the potential to grow significantly – Supporting the work of the local universities and FE college in developing their teaching and research links with partner institutions in China – Development work to explore the potential for a Fintech mission to Shenyang, subject to agreement and support of Invest NI. This work is at an early stage. As it develops, further information will be brought back to the Committee for information and approval if required – Work will continue to develop partnership projects on Smart Cities, involving research and industry partners from Belfast and Shenyang – Support for the 2019 Chinese New Year event in Belfast, at a cost not to exceed £5,000. <p><u>Boston</u></p>
3.9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Belfast City Council will undertake a civic mission led by the Lord Mayor in April 2018. The purpose of this visit will be to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch the 2018 Friendship Four tournament with Mayor Walsh • Support the Belfast Bridge to Mass Challenge entrepreneurs pilot programme – this will involve 8 local tech businesses attending a Boston-based bootcamp helping them secure investment and new business partnerships • Finalise details for a Belfast philanthropy fund with Boston investment • Seek agreement for a Boston led business mission late in 2018 and define sectors

- Discuss further engagement with Harvard around arts and theatre
 - Continue discussion to develop a joint pilot city Economic Resilience project (Boston is also a member of the 100 RC Resilient Cities network).
 - The visit will incur a maximum cost of £5,000 for Belfast City Council.
- Belfast who will host an inward mission led by the Mayor of Boston's international team, comprising businesses, business support organisations and representatives from the education sector. The delegates will undertake a programme developed by Belfast City Council in partnership with key stakeholders, including the universities, Belfast Metropolitan College, the US Consulate, the Venture Capital sector and the NI Chamber. The visit will take place in early May 2018. The above will incur a maximum cost of £5,000 for Belfast City Council.
 - Belfast City Council will support the 2018 4th Annual Friendship Four Ice Hockey tournament in partnership with the SSE Arena. This event will build on the success of the previous events and will attract new teams, thereby increasing its profile in the US Market
 - Belfast City Council will also support the 2018 2nd Annual Basketball Hall of Fame tournament. This event will build on the success of the inaugural event (see Appendix 1) and will involve eight teams from across key US locations. This represents an opportunity to profile Belfast in each of the locations. The development work this year will focus on increasing the involvement of colleges, schools and the community sector in these tournaments to promote study abroad and scholarship opportunities. Both the Friendship Four event and the Basketball Hall of Fame event will require a financial contribution from Belfast City Council of up to £50,000 maximum each. Planning work for both events is currently well underway. Future updates will be brought to the Committee to provide more detail on teams involved, funding levered and promotional opportunities
 - Belfast City Council will continue to work with the tourism sector to co-host familiarisation visits to promote the City as a business and leisure destination, and will explore opportunities for future tourism showcases, in partnership with Tourism Ireland.

Nashville

- Belfast City Council will deliver the 'Nashville in Belfast' week in April/May 2018 (budget already secured). This will involve a series of cultural performances as well as a range of partner activities to support business linkages, promote tourism and encourage student exchanges

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- Belfast City Council will work with Invest NI and the US State Department along with the Nashville Economic Development Team, to host a business mission to Belfast in 2018/2019 linking Nashville businesses to potential Belfast partners and companies seeking to do international trade. A budget of £20,000 towards the cost of hosting this event was approved by the Committee in December 2017.
- Belfast City Council will continue to support the FE college and both universities as they develop their education linkages in Nashville with Belmont and Vanderbilt Universities
- Belfast City Council will support educational exchanges between schools in both cities, including hosting work placement opportunities as required (as we have done recently).

In addition to involvement with our Sister Cities, Belfast also works in a number of additional locations that have relevant business, educational or tourism links. These include:

Dublin

- Work has been ongoing with Dublin City Council and other over the last number of years to develop joint activities and programmes for initial interest both on a City to City basis and along the economic corridor.
- The Lord Mayor of Dublin, Mícheál Mac Donncha, will visit Belfast in March 2018. The purpose of the visit is to consider areas for future engagement between Belfast and Dublin in the coming year. A report on any proposed actions will be brought back to this Committee for information and approval, if required
- Given that one of the priority strands within the emerging City Deals work is on infrastructure, there has been recent engagement between Dublin City Council and its neighbouring Councils along with the six Local Authorities in the Belfast Region City Deal area, to consider whether Belfast-Dublin infrastructure links might be considered as part of this investment package. Arising from the issues identified during presentation and discussion at the Members Brexit workshop held on 21 November 2017 and reported on 6 December 2017, Officers are exploring the potential for a Belfast–Dublin Economic Conference with support from public stakeholders including Invest NI and IntertradeIreland, private partners and potentially impacted neighbouring Councils. It is anticipated that the Conference will be hosted in May 2018 (tbc). The programme is currently under development but likely discussion topics include Infrastructure (e.g. Rail Connections and Fibre), Trading Relationships, Migration, education and Innovation. Innovation will include place shaping and how we can influence the creation of an Innovation hub across

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Belfast and Dublin. The Conference will be high profile presenting two cities open for business and investment. It is anticipated that it will be held over two days, one in Belfast and the other in Dublin. It is proposed that a series of business seminars are developed alongside the Conference. Topics may include: City Leadership Skills for SMEs, Workforce Scenario Planning, impact of Brexit on Future Sector Growth, International Trade and Export Post-Brexit and the Changing Funding Landscape

- To encourage trade between Belfast and Dublin, it is proposed that consideration is given to working with local companies to develop business leads that may generate new partnerships, joint ventures, sourcing relationships or market development opportunities. The maximum Council contribution to the Conference (above) and the business support is £40,000.
- To encourage joint inward and outward business investment activities between Belfast and Dublin for example in the coming months a Lead Development Agency is managing an inward Trade Mission from Luxemburg to Dublin relating to Professional Services such as Asset Management. Officers are exploring opportunities for Belfast to also feature in the Trade Mission. The timescale for the Trade Mission is still to be scheduled.

City of London

- Members will be aware that there has been ongoing engagement between Belfast and the City of London. At present, a member of Council staff is seconded to the City of London Cooperation in order to explore opportunities for further collaborative engagement.
- One of the areas of particular joint interest that has emerged is support for the financial services sector post-Brexit. There is both a sectoral ecosystem which should be promoted between London and Belfast as well as Belfast and Dublin.
- Members will be aware that the City of London now has a regional strategy for financial and professional services which features Belfast and that the Lord Mayor of London is promoting this internationally.
- Members will also be aware that Belfast City Council has been supporting the Belfast Partners network in London for the last two years. Belfast Partners is a network of London-based companies with an interest in Belfast – focusing on the city as a business and investment location. As part of our engagement with the network, we have now hosted two major receptions in the City of London (the last one took place in the Mansion House on 23 November 2017) and organised a business mission for six local tech companies to engage with London based partners on 22 and 23

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November 2017. As a result of this mission, the businesses were each able to meet four high profile prospective customers in Central London. Post-programme evaluation will be undertaken in April 2018 but initial feedback suggests that the businesses all made valuable connections with significant potential for new business.

An inward investment visit for 10 Venture Capital companies based in London is scheduled in Belfast for 6 and 7 March 2018, in collaboration with Belfast Partners and the British Business Bank as well as local partners including Invest NI, CSIT, Novosco and KPMG. The delegates will participate in an organised visit programme, designed to showcase Belfast's technology sector. Local companies will have an opportunity to engage directly with Venture Capitalists to explore opportunities for leveraging Venture Capital finance to grow their business.

The Council and partners also engage in a number of international profiling events and support Belfast-based activities aimed at attracting international audiences to the City. Planned activities for 2018/2019 include:

New York - New Belfast: 6-9 June 2018

- Members will be aware that, for the last number of years, the Council has supported the New York – New Belfast Conference. This annual event takes place in New York in June. It attracts Belfast-based business and tourism leads and provides an opportunity to profile developments and investment opportunities in the City and to encourage greater levels of US investment and visitor numbers
- In previous years, the Chair of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee has attended along with one Officer. The Chair is given significant profile as part of the Conference programme. It is proposed that the Chair and one Officer attend the June 2018 event. This will provide the Chair with an opportunity to profile the City's new investment opportunities, using the new City narrative and brand. The costs associated with attendance at this event will not exceed £7,500 – comprised of sponsorship (£5,000) and travel/accommodation (up to £2,500 in total).

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Belfast International Homecoming: 3 – 5 October 2018

- Members will also be aware that the Council has supported the Homecoming Conference which takes place each year in Belfast in October. The Conference attracts the diaspora who have significant business networks and connections in the USA and looks at how they can lever this social capital to support economic growth in Belfast and among Belfast-based businesses.
- The event will present a significant opportunity for the Council to set out its vision and

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leadership ambitions in promoting inclusive economic growth in Belfast. There will be a number of speaking opportunities for both Elected Members and senior Officers. It is proposed that the Council agrees to sponsor the event at a cost of £5,000. As part of the sponsorship, there will be opportunities for attendance by the Chair and Deputy Chair of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee (or nominees).

Support for Eurocities network

Members will be aware that Belfast has been a member of the Eurocities network for some time. Eurocities is a network of more than 140 major European cities, made up of the elected local and municipal governments of major European cities. Eurocities is structured through a range of working groups on issues such as Culture, Social Affairs, Knowledge Society and Environment. Belfast has participated in a number of the working groups and has developed collaborative projects with other cities facing similar urban challenges. The City has also shared learning on a range of topics and has availed of the network to engage with the key EU institutions in order to influence policy.

In order to maintain access to these networks and to ensure that Belfast retains the insight and high-level contacts in Brussels and other cities, it is proposed that Belfast City Council renews its annual subscription to Eurocities at a cost of €16,000.

Financial and Resource Implications

It is proposed that Members approve and agree to provide financial support to the range of activities and events set out in sections 3.7-3.15 above. These allocations have been included in the budget estimates which were approved by the Council in February 2018. They include:

Shenyang/China

- Development work to support the delivery of a Belfast/Shenyang tourism showcase in Shenyang. The costs associated with this event will not exceed £25,000
- Support for the 2019 Chinese New Year event in Belfast at a cost not to exceed £5,000.

Boston

- Support the development and delivery of a civic and business mission to Boston in April 2018. The costs associated with this visit will not exceed £5,000
- Support the delivery of an inward business mission from Boston in early May 2018. Costs will not exceed £5,000.

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3.17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree to support the fourth annual Friendship Four Ice Hockey event in November 2018 at a cost not to exceed £50,000. - Agree to support the second annual Basketball Hall of Fame Tournament to take place towards the end of 2018 at a cost not to exceed £50,000. <p><u>Dublin</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support the Belfast-Dublin Economic Corridor Conference and the cross-border business development activity (subject to further engagement and partner support) at a cost not to exceed £40,000. <p><u>London</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree to set aside a budget of up to £40,000 to undertake a series of Belfast-based visits and events to attract London-based investors and Venture Capitalists to the City as well as developing a business mission programme for Belfast companies to explore new business opportunities in London. <p><u>New York-New Belfast Event</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree to sponsor the June 2018 New York-New Belfast conference to a value of £5,000. Travel and accommodation costs not to exceed £2,500. <p><u>International Homecoming Event</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree to support the October 2018 Homecoming Conference at a maximum cost of £5,000. <p><u>Eurocities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree to renew the Council's annual membership of the Eurocities network at a cost of €16,000. <p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>The International Relations Framework was equality screened.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: International Relations Outputs: October 2017 – March 2018.