



Subject:	Update on International Relations and Forward Work Plan
Date:	6th March, 2019
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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 the Committee on the delivery of the International Relations Framework focusing on activity over the 6 months since October; 2018 and– seek approval for the delivery of the 2019/2020 Action Plan and associated budgets.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is requested to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. note the range of activity and associated outputs of International Relations actions over the course of the second half of this financial year; and

	<p>ii. agree the International Relations Action Plan outlining activity commitments for 2019/2020 as set out in sections 3.8 – 3.12.</p>
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 as a place to invest, work, visit and study. The Framework is delivering primarily on the formal relationships already in existence through our Sister City Agreements with Shenyang, Boston and Nashville, the Memorandum of Understanding with Dublin, and developing relationships 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 Committee meeting on 10th October, 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 2018 to March 2019, and outlines an Action Plan for international activity and associated costs for 2019/2020. A number of the activities are still under development and further updates or requests for approval may be brought back to the Committee for information and endorsement in the course of the year.
3.4	<p>The International Relations activity set out in this report focuses principally on our established 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 ICC 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 2019 – 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. We have also supported local businesses to develop international partnerships and benefit from international expertise. This includes our partnership with Invest NI and Catalyst Inc. on the Way to Scale programme which targets local businesses with the potential to scale and attract investment.

3.5 This range of activity is delivered in collaboration with the 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, Queen’s University Belfast, Ulster University, the Consulates and the NI Executive Office. The attached appendix 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 2019/2020, 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. 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.

3.7 While many of the activities are still under development, it is proposed that the 2019/2020 Action Plan will focus on the following priority areas in order to maximise the return on investment, given the limited resources available:

Shenyang

3.8

Civic/Political

- Support for an inaugural “China in Belfast” Programme”: this programme is still under development but is likely to involve re-packaging many existing and planned partner activities to highlight the depth of the linkages with China across many partner organisations in the city. Details of potential civic and business inward visits are currently being finalised and will be presented to Members as more information becomes available. The Belfast City Council associated budget for supporting activity associated with the “China in Belfast” programme will not exceed £20,000
- Ongoing support to the Chinese Consulate team and the new Consul General to support relevant civic visits
- Support for the 2020 Chinese New Year in Belfast at a cost not to exceed £10,000
- Participation in the 5th China-UK Regional Leaders Summit to be held in Scotland in 2019. Further detail and costings to follow.

Business

3.9

- Development work underway with The Executive Office, Invest NI and NI Councils engaged in China, to explore the feasibility of a business mission to China in Autumn 2019. This activity will build on official linkages made by the five other NI Councils during the third China UK Regional Leaders Summit held in Dalian in October 2018. It allows Belfast City Council to focus in on the economic, business and investment pillar of the International Relations Framework and work with the City of Shenyang, its economic Stakeholders and Free Trade Zone. It is anticipated that each Council would identify a number of companies at the appropriate state of readiness to do business in China. The costs associated with this event will not exceed £25,000.

Tourism

3.10

- Ongoing support to Visit Belfast in their follow up to the 2018 joint Tourism Showcase in Shenyang. Visit Belfast is preparing for two inward familiarisation visits from the Shenyang and greater China tourism industry. Work is already underway to develop bespoke tourism products with industry partners to encourage them to become China Ready and exploit the opportunity of the two new direct flights from Dublin
- Ongoing support to the new NI China Tourism Cluster to significantly develop a Northern Ireland Strategy and Action Plan for engaging in China, increasing both leisure and business visitors.

Education/Culture

3.11

- Hosting an education mission from Shenyang in May 2019, in partnership with the Department of Education, The Executive Office and other relevant stakeholders
- Ongoing support to both Universities, Belfast Metropolitan College and the educational sector overall in developing their teaching, research and foreign student market with partner Institutions in China.

Boston

Business

3.12

- Belfast will host two Business Missions from the Boston area in 2019. From 29-30 April 2019, 25 companies will travel with the British American Business Council of New England. This mission is being promoted by Mayor Walsh's Economic Development team and the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce and will involve a targeted business to business programme in partnership with Invest NI. From 4-8 December 2019, the Boston Irish Business Association will travel to Belfast with up to 20 companies to attend the annual International Homecoming Conference and undertake a programme of business to business meetings
- Exploratory work is currently under way to scope out a potential Belfast visit to Boston in the course of 2019. There are a number of areas of interest for this visit including engagement with Mayor Walsh and his relevant officials, exploring potential cooperation on Resilient Cities and City Recovery work, support for some of the sports-based events and partnerships (including Friendship Four) and a tourism showcase event in conjunction with Tourism Ireland. Details of this planned activity will be brought back to the committee at a future date for endorsement. Costs of any visit will not exceed £10,000
- Belfast City Council has been asked to support the 7th Annual International Homecoming Business and Investment Conference at a cost of £10,000. It is proposed by the organising Committee (attended by BCC Senior Officers and Councillors) that the theme of the 2019 Conference is focused on the Belfast Agenda, promoting achievements to date but setting challenges to the International visiting experts on proposing solutions to some of the cities work areas e.g. regeneration, corporate social responsibility, resilience, business growth post Brexit etc.

3.13	<p><u>Education/Culture</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Plans are at an advanced stage of development to connect Belfast’s two teacher training colleges to schools in Boston focusing on the methodology of teaching of STEM subjects – Plans are now in place to hold the first Belfast/Boston Hackathon on 6 April 2019 which will enable young people in both cities to address the challenge of city regeneration and neighbourhood revitalisation.
3.14	<p><u>Nashville</u></p> <p><u>Business</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Plans are at an early stage of development to identify opportunities along with Invest NI and Catalyst Inc to lead a small business mission to Nashville in 2019. Members will recall the May 2018 inward mission from Nashville and the very positive feedback from the companies and Venture Capitalist delegates. A further report will be presented to Members with regard to this in the near future. Members are asked to agree in principle to a working budget of £15,000 for this mission, subject to detail being brought back for approval.
3.15	<p><u>Education/Culture</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Planning work is at an advanced stage to coordinate a second Nashville in Belfast Programme from 12-16 June 2019 in partnership with key stakeholders. This year’s programme will build on the previous year’s event. Council support of £20,000 is requested to support the communications and marketing campaign and the hosting of the Nashville delegation who will be in the city at the same time – Cinemagic undertook an exploratory visit to Nashville in December 2019, making key contacts, and will return in March 2019 to work with disadvantaged Nashville youth, to write and produce a music video (keeping in theme of Music City). This will ultimately be linked to a three-way project with Nashville, Boston and Belfast around film making skills, development and employability of young people in all three Sister Cities.
3.16	<p><u>Support for Eurocities Network</u></p> <p>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</p>

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, particularly in a post-Brexit context, it is proposed that Belfast City Council renews its annual subscription to Eurocities at a cost of €16,700.

Other International Engagement Activities

3.17

- Belfast City Council has received a sponsorship request for a contribution of £5,000 towards the annual New York New Belfast Conference in June 2019. Members will recall that this event showcases the new Belfast to the US-based audience and is a useful channel for promoting our key business, investment and cultural messaging. If endorsed by members, officers will work with the organising team to influence the agenda in line with city and council priorities. If the Committee agrees to financial support, it is also requested that the Chair of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the Director of Economic Development, or nominees, attend and participate in the conference
- Belfast City Council will be requested to provide input into a number of potential inward missions on 2019. The level of engagement will be assessed by officers, and will be commensurate with the potential return for the city. Early indications include interest from both Seattle and Philadelphia. Any costs arising from these visits will be met within existing unit budgets.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.18

It is proposed that Members approve and agree financial support for the range of activities and events set out in sections above. These allocations have been included in the budget estimates for 2019/2020.

Shenyang/China

3.19

- Support for an inaugural China in Belfast programme 2019/20 at a maximum cost of £20,000
- Support for 2020 Chinese New Year event in Belfast at a maximum of £10,000
- Support the development work and delivery of a pilot China Business Mission in partnership with other relevant players. The cost of this will not exceed £25,000

<p>3.20</p> <p>3.21</p> <p>3.22</p> <p>3.23</p> <p>3.24</p> <p>3.25</p>	<p><u>Boston</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support the development and delivery of a civic and business mission to Boston in 2019 (date tbc). Details are currently being developed and will be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee for endorsement. The cost of this will not exceed £10,000. <p><u>Nashville</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support the promotion and marketing of the second Nashville in Belfast week and host a Nashville delegation at a maximum cost of £20,000 - Support an outward business focused mission to Nashville in 2019 at a maximum cost of £15,000 (subject to agreement with partners) <p><u>New York/New Belfast</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree to sponsor the June 2019 NYNB Annual Conference to a value of £5,000 and agree attendance of the Chair of City Growth and Regeneration Committee and Director of Economic Development or nominees at a maximum cost of £2,500. <p><u>International Homecoming Conference</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree to sponsor the 2019 Homecoming Conference at a maximum cost of £10,000. <p><u>Eurocities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree to renew the council's annual newsletter of the Eurocities Network at a cost of €16,700. <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>No specific equality or good relations implications. The International Relations Framework has been equality screened. No rural need impacts.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Document Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix - International Relations Outputs: September 2018 – March 2019.</p>