



Subject:	Update on International Relations
Date:	5th June, 2019
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic 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	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time 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/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval for a number of activities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Friendship Four Ice Hockey initiative: this project was one of the earliest activities that came about through the Belfast-Boston Sister City agreement. The initiative is organised by The Odyssey Trust, who have requested financial support of £47,500 from the Council for this calendar year, out of a total project cost of around £250,000;• Facilitating an Inward Visit, including a welcome reception for the New York State Legislators from 21st-23rd September 2019, at a maximum cost of £2,000;• Attendance by the Chair of Committee (or nominee) plus one officer at the EURO CITIES annual conference on 20-22 November 2019 in Prague, at a maximum cost of £2,000; <p>and</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participation by the Director of Economic Development (or his nominee) in an Invest NI-led business and investment mission to Israel at the end of July 2019, at a cost not to exceed £2,500.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is requested to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> note the financial ask, as well as the anticipated outputs of the Friendship Four event and consider the funding request of £47,500 for the current financial year; agree the facilitation and cost of welcoming the New York State Legislators from 21st-23rd September 2019 at a maximum cost of £2,000; approve the attendance of the Chair (or her nominee) plus one officer, at the EURO CITIES annual conference in Prague on 20-22 November 2019, at a cost not to exceed £2,000; agree the participation of the Director of Economic Development (or his nominee) in an Invest NI-led business and investment mission to Israel at the end of July 2019, at a cost not to exceed £1,500; and agree the participation of the Chair of the Committee and the Director of Economic Development (or their nominees), plus one additional officer, on the upcoming Sister Cities business missions to Boston, Nashville and Shenyang. <p>All elements will be resourced from within the EU/International Unit and the Economic Development budgets which have already been approved by this Committee.</p>
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><u>Friendship Four</u></p> <p>The Friendship Four tournament was one of the first major outputs of the Belfast-Boston Sister City agreement signed in 2014. This competition remains the first and only National Collegiate Athletic Association of the USA (NCAA) Division 1 hockey tournament to be held outside of the United States. Taking place over the Thanksgiving period, four colleges, alumni and family supporters travel to Belfast for a week. The games are televised live in the United States and Canada with the tournament also garnering a significant following on social media platforms locally, nationally and internationally.</p>

3.2	<p>In addition to the matches, the tournament encompasses a number of satellite events. The College students undertake visits to local schools whereby young people are able to learn about the American education system and scholarship opportunities and the visiting students are immersed in the local culture. The tournament also features a “Festival of STEM” hosted by W5. W5 is the interactive science and discovery centre located managed by the Odyssey Trust and the STEM Ambassador Hub for Northern Ireland. The emphasis of the Festival of STEM programme is to promote these subjects across the curriculum, the involvement of women in sport and career opportunities within these disciplines</p>
3.3	<p>Since the first tournament in 2014, the Friendship Four programme has diversified and entered into new areas of activity. In 2018/19, two new initiatives were delivered as part of the initiative. The inaugural women’s competition was held in January 2019 and a business, education and tourism showcase promoted the local creativity and innovation across these sectors to those visiting the city as part of the event.</p>
3.4	<p>The Odyssey Trust has developed a business plan for the three year period 2019-2021. It identifies an annual visitor spend in the region of £320,000 by event participants. It also notes that the live television coverage of the event will reach more than 150million households. Plans are well advanced for the 2019 event. Teams confirmed as participating include Colgate (NY), Northeastern, Princeton (NJ) and New Hampshire. Teams proposed for the 2020 and 2021 competitions include Boston College, Michigan, Quinnipiac, Harvard, UMass Lowell, Vermont, Providence, Notre Dame and Clarkson.</p>
3.5	<p>Belfast City Council has been a principal funder of this event since its inception, alongside the Department for Communities (DfC), Tourism Northern Ireland, Tourism Ireland, Invest NI, The US Consulate and the Odyssey Trust. Private sector income is levered through corporate sponsorship and ticket sales. In terms of alignment with Belfast Agenda targets, the proposed event supports a number of the key priorities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the number of bednights, particularly those from out of state visitors • Promoting and positioning the city to compete by building on the sports programme and creating a strong marketing and branding piece, focusing on the city’s economic and tourism strengths.
3.6	<p>Given the significant reliance on public support for the event, the Odyssey Trust is currently in the process of trying to secure the funding from the partners identified above. If the Committee agrees to provide the amount of funding requested from Belfast City Council,</p>

officers will develop a detailed Legal Agreement with key performance indicators for the event and the release of funding will be subject to the organiser's ability to meet those targets.

EUROCITIES Annual Conference – 20-22 November 2019, Prague

3.7 Members will be aware that Belfast has been a member of the EUROCITIES network for 24 years. EUROCITIES is a network of more than 140 major European cities, made up of the elected local and municipal governments of major European cities. The network is structured through the thematic fora of Culture, Social Affairs, Knowledge Society and Environment and each forum has a number of working groups. Belfast has participated in a number of the groups, based on particular areas of need or interest to the council and the city at that time. We have 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.

3.8 Members will be aware that, in March 2019, this Committee agreed to the council's continued participation in the network. The annual conference enables cities to review and input into the future work plans, elect the Executive committee and discuss urban issues and challenges of specific interest. The theme for the 2019 conference is "City Transformation" with pertinent issues on the agenda such as establishing new purposes for vacant historic buildings, addressing population decline in urban centres and greening the city.

3.9 In order to maintain access to the network and to ensure that Belfast retains the insight and high-level contacts in Brussels and other cities, it is proposed that the Committee Chair (or her nominee) plus one officer attends this conference.

New York State Legislators Visit to Belfast, 21-23 September 2019

3.10 Belfast City Council has received a request from the Assembly Member and President of the American Irish Legislators Society of New York State, Mr Michael Cusick, to host a delegation of up to 50 members from 21-23 September 2019.

3.11 The delegation will be undertaking a mission to Ireland from 18-27 September, and will be in Belfast for a series of economic, political and community meetings.

3.12 The aim of their visit is to demonstrate continued US commitment to advancing investment and transatlantic partnerships as well as continued interest in the NI Peace Process. The delegation last visited NI in 2015 and Belfast City Council hosted the group and facilitated relevant meetings and briefings at this time.

3.13	<p>Members are requested to provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome and networking reception with key stakeholders; and• Formal business meeting with Belfast City Council members and officers to discuss how to enhance cooperation between Belfast and the State of New York.
3.14	<p>In order to re-invigorate business, academic and cultural/tourism links with the state of New York using the influence of the Society, it is proposed that the Committee agrees to the above requests at a cost not to exceed £2,000.</p>
3.15	<p><u>Business and Investment Mission to Israel</u></p> <p>Members will be aware that the Council has been working closely with Invest NI and Catalyst Inc to explore ways of bringing forward collaborative initiatives to support local businesses to become more competitive. This includes exploring new markets for their products and services and new avenues to lever investment. As part of these negotiations, Invest NI is working on an investment and business mission to the Israel. The trip will take place on the week commencing 29 July 2019 and will also involve Catalyst Inc. The aim of the mission is to facilitate access to investment and new market opportunities for 5 Belfast based businesses. By taking part in the visit, it is anticipated that the Council will get greater insight into the potential for new business and investment opportunities in this location in order to inform our future work programme.</p>
3.16	<p><u>Business Missions to Nashville, Boston and Shenyang</u></p> <p>Members will be aware of a previous report in March when approval was given to Belfast City Council to undertake three business missions to our Sister Cities, Nashville, Boston and Shenyang.</p>
3.17	<p>Plans are now well underway to recruit companies and develop itineraries for these visits. In order to ensure resources to deliver the civic business and logistical elements of each programme, Members are asked to approve the participation of the Chair of Committee and the Director of Economic Development (or nominees) as well as another officer.</p>
3.18	<p>The budgets for each of these visits have already been approved by the City Growth and Regeneration Committee. Additional details on the respective visit programmes will be brought back to future meetings of the committee once available.</p>

3.19	<p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>There are no direct Equality or Good Relations implications associated with these activities.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>3.20 Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • approve financial support of up to £47,500 towards the Friendship Four tournament in November 2019, subject to a legal agreement and subject to the organisers meeting agreed objectives; • agree the facilitation and cost of welcoming the New York State Legislators from 21-23 September at a maximum cost of £2,000; • note that the financial implications of attending the EURO CITIES annual conference are estimated at a maximum cost of £2,000; • note that the costs associated with attendance at the business and investment mission visit to Middle East will not exceed £1,500; and • note that the costs associated with participation in the future business missions to Boston, Shenyang and Nashville have already been approved by this Committee. <p>All budgetary allocations have been set aside within the EU & International or the Economic Development Unit budgets which have already been approved by this Committee.</p>
4.0	Documents Attached
4.1	None