



Subject:	Update on International Relations
Date:	6th November 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 provide the Committee with a six month progress update on the delivery of the International Relations Framework
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is requested to note the progress of the Council's International Relations work for the period April – October 2019, as well as the proposed programme of activity for the rest of the financial year.

3.0	Main Report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	In March 2019, the City Growth and Regeneration Committee approved the International Relations Plan for the financial year 2019/2020. This report provides an update on the high-level outputs over the last six months, focusing on activity with our Sister Cities of Boston, Nashville and Shenyang, as well as additional international delivery. It also sets out some of the priority areas of work for the coming six months.
3.2	Members will be aware that a key role for the Council is to act as an enabler to develop linkages and relationships for other partners that will bear fruit in terms of economic return for those organisations and for the city as a whole. As a result, the international relations activity focuses on areas identified as having the greatest potential for return, principally educational linkages, business linkages and civic/political connections.
3.3	The report sets out the key activities with each of the Sister Cities (Boston, Nashville and Shenyang) over the last six months, as well as some planned activity until the end of the financial year.
	<u>Boston</u>
3.4	Key activities with Boston partners over the last six months include:
	<u>Education</u>
3.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitation of an inward visit led by the British American Business Council of New England (BABCNE) in April 2019. This comprised mainly of academic leaders and they engaged in a series of meetings including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Discussions around the development of a strategic partnership between Ulster University and UMASS (the only public university in the State of Massachusetts) focussing on nursing and entrepreneurship ○ Discussions with QUB and UMASS on cooperation around QUB-led Summer Schools on Conflict Resolution ○ Discussions with Ulster University and UMASS on developing a 'Go Boston' programme for 100 Ulster University students based on the successful 'Go Philly' model for student experience and industry placements ○ Early discussions between the NOW Group and UMASS on the roll-out of the JAM Card

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belfast City Council facilitated a return visit in October 2019 by the Head of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Massachusetts (AICUM). The purpose of this visit was to explore a range of potential leads with both universities and Belfast Metropolitan College in order to support additional exchanges and to develop joint educational programmes. This work is ongoing; and • Belfast City Council supported programming for three Fulbright Scholars who spent six months in Belfast at QUB from January – June 2019. One of these has led to the potential for theatre and poet links with the Harvard Poets' Theatre Boston and the Lyric and MAC theatres in Belfast. This work is ongoing. <p><u>Business</u></p>
3.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress to Year 2 of the Way to Scale programme with Boston is under way with plans for 10 Belfast companies to travel to Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in January 2020, followed by an intensive business mentoring programme in Boston in March 2020. The Boston Sister Cities network is supporting this programme by providing access for the companies to key individuals and organisations within the city to complement the planned business engagement programme • Officers continue to provide links for individual businesses wishing to explore partnerships or develop linkages with Boston-based companies. As part of this work, we also work closely with Invest NI in Boston. <p><u>Civic / Political</u></p>
3.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belfast City Council, led by the Lord Mayor, visited Boston from 23-26 September 2019 to undertake a series of meetings. This included a meeting with Mayor Walsh to recognise the fifth year of our Sister City partnership between the two cities. It also included meetings with Boston-based companies that have investment locations in Belfast as well as visits to social projects addressing issues such as drug and alcohol dependence and projects supporting the development of cooperatives.

Youth / Culture / Sport

- 3.8
- Belfast City Council facilitated the second Boston Youth Empowerment programme exchange to the city. This partnership continues to develop between the Boston programme and Active Communities Network Belfast to encourage youth development and employability through sport
 - Belfast City Council is a key funder of the Friendship Four Ice Hockey tournament, taking place in Belfast from 29-30 November 2019. The teams are Colgate, Northeastern, Princeton and University of New Hampshire. The project also encompasses a month-long Science and Discovery programme to promote access opportunities in the sector as well as workshops to encourage female participation in sport and science industries. The second Friendship Series will take place from 4-5 January 2020 and includes Quinnipiac University and Merrimack College. This competition enables female sportswomen the opportunity to play in an international competition. This year Mayor Walsh will attend the November tournament and will undertake a programme of keynote speeches and meetings to underline Boston's continued support for the Sister City partnership
 - Through Belfast City Council connections, Cinemagic, along with film industry professionals, produced a film that was completely written and directed by disadvantaged young people from Belfast and Boston. The film was showcased to over 500 industry professionals in Los Angeles. Further work around filmmaking and creative industries involving young people from both cities is currently being planned.

Nashville

- 3.9
- Key activities with Nashville over the last six months include:

Business

- 3.10
- Within the framework of the Nashville in Belfast programme which took place 12-16 June 2019, a delegation of 43 people from Nashville visited Belfast for a week. This included a number of new political representatives that had not previously been part of the civic engagement between the cities. The Nashville partners themselves invested up to \$100,000 on the programme and there are ongoing collaborations, particularly within the hospitality sector.

	<p><u>Education</u></p> <p>3.11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belfast Metropolitan College supported a follow-up visit by the Tennessee Board of Regents (the umbrella body for all public community colleges and technical colleges in the state). The delegation of 16 College Vice-Presidents represented 60 educational institutions. The purpose of the visit was to exploring opportunities for expanding their study abroad opportunities to include Belfast partnerships. Work is still ongoing to work on the detail of this proposal • Other schools and university links are continuing and Council officers meet regularly with the institutions to understand how the city linkages can support their further development • A project between the Belfast Youth Forum and the Mayor's Forum-Overton High School connecting young people in both cities is progressing and embarking on the development of podcasts highlighting pertinent issues affecting their age group. <p><u>Culture</u></p> <p>3.12</p> <p>The second Nashville in Belfast programme included 18 events over the four-day period. The programme's objective was to promote the Council's longest standing Sister City relationship. Local stakeholders were crucial to the project's development. Independent research into the collective economic impact of the programme has been estimated at more than £800,000.</p> <p><u>Shenyang</u></p> <p>3.13</p> <p>Key activities with Shenyang since April this year include:</p> <p><u>Education</u></p> <p>3.14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University continue to strengthen their work in Shenyang, and Belfast City Council hosted their respective summer schools in City Hall, providing opportunities to meet with the Lord Mayor and other councillors • The Lord Mayor provided a Sister City video message to the China Queen's College (CQC) in Shenyang to welcome the fresher students and congratulate the graduates. He also welcomed the first cohort of 12 postgraduate CQC students to City Hall • Belfast City Council hosted a delegation of Chinese vocational colleges led by Colleges NI to secure training contacts and partnerships. This work is in its final negotiation stages.
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3.15	<p><u>Business</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans for a November 2019 Innovation Mission to be led by the NI Executive Office and Invest NI have been deferred to Q4 2019/20 to allow for a more targeted recruitment of NI companies. The Lord Mayor will accompany the mission and lead the programme in Shenyang in partnership with Mayor Youwei. This was previously agreed by this Committee Belfast City Council connected two local companies to the Chinese Consulate office in Belfast and one of these is now opening a showroom in Shanghai and has integrated into the NI diaspora in China Belfast City Council was a key stakeholder in hosting a Consulate-led business, tourism and media leaders mission from London in June 2019. The delegates were senior representatives from Chinese HQs in London who were given a detailed overview of business and FDI & capital investment opportunities in Belfast. There was extensive media coverage of the visit on mainstream and social media in China. Follow up work is ongoing to assess the impact and potential additional opportunities. <p><u>Culture</u></p> <p>3.16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belfast City Council worked with the Consulate on a significant programme of events in September-October 2019, to celebrate the Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival. The programme, led by Consul General Zhang and the NI Executive Office, delivered 6 large events to mark a number of anniversaries including 70 years of the creation of the People's Republic of China, 65 years of China-UK relations and 5 years since the establishment of the Chinese Consulate in Belfast. Belfast City Council is working with Chinese Stakeholders to prepare for Chinese New Year celebrations and directly supporting two of these in Belfast. <p><u>Tourism</u></p> <p>3.17</p> <p>Belfast City Council contributed to the research being driven by Tourism NI and the sector to develop a NI China Tourism Strategy and Action Plan. This work acknowledges the increasing volume of Chinese tourists visiting Belfast and the need to ensure that local businesses are "China Ready" and attuned to the expectations of the visitors.</p>
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Wider Civic Engagement

3.18

Principally using the offices of the Lord Mayor as well as capitalising on the work of our business and tourism partners, the council team has hosted a number of inward visits over this period. These have focused on the economic and investment messaging, and have included opportunities for partnerships with local businesses; potential new FDI investments and cultural/educational partnerships between Belfast-based organisations and those in the relevant locations. One of the most significant of these over the period was the hosting of the second annual City Hall Welcome for 500 international students beginning their overseas study in the city which took place at the end of September 2019. This type of engagement is particularly welcomed by our education partners.

Priority areas of work until the end of the financial year include:

3.19

- Hosting the visit to Belfast by the Mayor of Boston from 27-30 November. This visit coincides with the Friendship Four ice hockey tournament and also a business and academic mission from the Boston Irish Business Association (BIBA). Details of the attendees have not yet been confirmed but, subject to their relevance and areas of interest, we will work with our partner organisations to develop appropriate meetings and engagements
- Supporting the delivery of the Way to Scale programme (see additional information above), including the two Boston-based elements taking place in January and March 2020
- Council officers are presently working with Invest NI (including the in-market contact point) to explore the potential of undertaking a small business-focused outward mission to Nashville early in the new calendar year. QUB, UU and the Belfast Chamber have expressed an interest in joining the City Council on this visit, subject to seeing the detail of the proposed programme
- Engaging with the NI Executive Office and Invest NI to scope out the detail of the deferred NI Innovation Business Mission to China. Approval has already been given for the participation of the Lord Mayor and two officers to accompany this mission. Belfast City Council will lead the programming for the Shenyang strand of the four city programme
- Belfast City Council will engage with Shenyang City Council to plan an inward business and academic mission before the end of the financial year
- Belfast City Council will also work with the NI Executive Office to participate in the re-scheduled UK China Regional Leaders Summit in 2020 which is to take place in

	<p>Edinburgh. Approval has already been given for the participation of the Lord Mayor and one officer in this programme.</p> <p><u>Moving forward</u></p>
3.20	<p>While there is a substantial volume of activity under way, officers are currently undertaking a mid-term review of the International Relations Framework 2016-2021. This will review the work undertaken to date and consider how to maximise the impact of our investment, taking account of the whole range of international development, investment and promotion activity in which the council is engaged. A report on the proposed priorities for the next phase of this activity will be brought back to a future meeting of this committee.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p>
3.21	<p>No specific financial implications. The activity undertaken as part of this International Relations Framework was approved at the 6 March 2019 meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
3.22	<p>There are no Equality or Good Relations Implications attached to this report.</p>
4.0	Documents Attached
	None