



Subject:	Update on additional investment in tourism upgrades
Date:	10 February 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
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<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
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"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	<p>The purpose of this report is to update Members on further recovery funding that has been made available by Tourism NI. It is requested that Belfast City Council works in partnership with Visit Belfast to facilitate this funding in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Make the necessary health and safety adjustments to the Cruise Belfast Welcome Hub</li><li>– Provide digital upgrades to existing visitor servicing</li><li>– Enhance conference subvention scheme to support business tourism recovery</li></ul>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Note the contents of the report and agree that Belfast City Council works in partnership with Tourism NI and Visit Belfast to facilitate necessary recovery support funding via contractual mechanisms as advised by Legal Services.</li> </ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Belfast's visitor economy has been severely impacted by Covid-19 and it is anticipated that many of the challenges that the pandemic has brought to the tourism and hospitality industry may be with us for some time in the future. It is in this context that Tourism NI have identified funding to support recovery of services provided by Visit Belfast including visitor servicing and business tourism retention.</p>
3.2	<p><u>Investment in Health and Safety upgrade to Cruise Hub</u></p> <p>Members will be aware that approval was granted at the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in January 2021 to work in partnership with Tourism NI and Visit Belfast to facilitate necessary Covid-19 health and safety upgrades. The total amount previously cited was an allocation of £110,000 from Tourism NI to support this work. Tourism NI have advised Council and Visit Belfast of an enhancement to the total amount awarded to this project which is now £135,000 inclusive of VAT. Members are asked to note this amended amount and approve officer facilitation of this funding.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Investment in visitor-facing technology in Visit Belfast Welcome Centre (VBWC)</u></p> <p>Since the VBWC opened in December 2013, many of the digital assets, including screens and devices are in need of upgrade and replacement in order to meet user needs and keep up with advances in technology. A further £35,000 (inclusive of VAT) of investment from Tourism NI has been agreed to support upgrades to digital assets in the centre. The overall aim of the investment is to ensure that VBWC continues to offer a best-in-class experience and continue to meet the expectations of today's travellers in terms of content, quality and speed. Both Belfast City Council and Tourism Northern Ireland's Gateway content on the current digital assets will be upgraded as part of the process. Members are asked to note this investment and approve officer facilitation of this project.</p>
3.4	<p><u>Investment in Conference Subvention</u></p> <p>Since 2016, Tourism NI has been an equal funder of the Conference Subvention Scheme that is used to secure conferences for Belfast; contributing £200,000 each financial year to the scheme which is administered on behalf of Belfast City Council and TNI by Visit Belfast.</p>

	<p>Tourism NI has successfully bid for additional recovery monies from the Department for Economy to further support bids for conferences in an ever more competitive market with challenges around for example access, space restrictions and hybrid format. It will be a one off support of £200,000 in financial year 2020/21 and will be additional to its existing commitment of £200,000 per annum to Belfast City Council to best support endeavours to secure conferences for future years.</p>
3.5	<p>Tourism NI has requested that Belfast City Council agree to accept an Addendum to the existing Conference Support Service Level Agreement for the £200,000 which will held to be drawn down as part of the existing scheme to increase retention and recovery of business tourism in the city as conferences are bid for and won for Belfast.</p>
3.6	<p><u>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no financial implications for Council other than an allocation of officer time to facilitate contract management and administration. The timing for administration of the Agreement and processing invoices is challenging but achievable and necessary in the context of facilitating a return to business and recovery for the tourism sector.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>Any proposed works and programmes will be required to adhere to required equality implications including access requirements.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
	None