



<b>Subject:</b>	Smart Belfast programme update
<b>Date:</b>	22 March 2024
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Sharon McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive / Strategic Director of Corporate Services
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Mark McCann, City Innovation manager (Acting) Deirdre Ferguson, Innovation Broker

**Is this report restricted?** Yes  No

**Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.**

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

**If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?**

<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sometime in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Call-in**

**Is the decision eligible for Call-in?** Yes  No

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	To update Members on a number of City Innovation projects and opportunities including details of the draft Belfast/Sejong 'Innovation Twins' roadmap and the associated visit by the Lord Mayor to South Korea in April.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Note the outline itinerary for the Lord Mayor's Innovation Twins mission to South Korea in April which is fully funded by DSIT.</li> <li>2. Approve the signing of an 'Innovation Twins' roadmap as a basis for further direct and bi-lateral development work with the city of Sejong on a number of initiatives.</li> <li>3. Approve the signing of a specific MoU with Sejong City Council to explore opportunities for net zero collaboration with the Belfast Climate Commissioner.</li> <li>4. Approve a letter of support to Ulster University for its bid to establish £2.5 million Digital Healthcare Technology Accelerator in Belfast including potential in-kind contribution.</li> <li>5. Note that officers will work with Queen's University on a £5 million Systems Approaches to the Transition to Net Zero bid.</li> <li>6. Approve Belfast City Council officer participation in the annual programme of the All Island Smart Cities Forum.</li> <li>7. Note progress on the development of the City Hall immersive experience and that details on the proposed experience will be presented to Committee in the coming months.</li> </ol>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	<p>The Smart Belfast urban innovation programme encourages collaborative innovation between government (both local and regional), industry, SMEs, academia and our communities. Evidence indicates that cities with strong collaborative innovation partnerships are more adept at attracting research funding and investment; and are much better equipped to develop solutions to complex urban policy challenges. The Smart Belfast programme relies primarily on third-party funding sources and in-kind contributions from participating partners. Below are details of the current significant initiatives, a number of which require Member approval.</p>
3.2	<p><b>Republic of Korea Innovation Twins programme</b></p> <p>The Innovation Twins programme is fully funded by DSIT and facilitated by Connected Places Catapult. It's designed to build relationships between four cities with existing urban innovation programmes (Belfast, Glasgow, Birmingham and Liverpool) and their South Korean counterparts with the aim of fostering long term collaborations that can generate trade, FDI and knowledge exchange. South Korea has one of the most successful innovation economies in the</p>

world and has ambitions to build much stronger trade and exchange relationships with Europe and north America.

3.3

Belfast City Council and its Innovation City Belfast partners, including Invest NI's team in South Korea, have been working with Sejong city officials to agree a joint roadmap that would be of benefit to both cities. A long-list of proposals for the roadmap was developed with partners over the past eighteen months which has now been shortlisted to seven initiatives which both cities want to progress. Members should note that these are all still at a formative stage, and each will require further work and agreement between both cities before they are confirmed as projects. The shortlist includes:

1. **Global Innovation Network** – Belfast's SME accelerator 'Catalyst' will work with Sejong Technopark and the Korean Centre for Creative Economy and Innovation to provide a platform for companies from both cities to support global collaboration, increase R&D activity, increase innovation rates and help to scale high growth driven innovation enterprises.
2. **Security in Space** – Queen's University ECIT team will work with Korea University to investigate post-quantum cryptography systems that will secure next-generation satellite communication systems.
3. **Green City Accelerator** – An MoU between Belfast City Council and Sejong City Council to develop energy and net zero projects led by our Climate Commissioner.
4. **Cyber-cities** – Queen's will collaborate with Korea University on a cyber-security Hackathon for students and a global cyber conference in Sejong.
5. **Invest NI's Smart Cities missions** – A smart city mission will take place enabling Northern Ireland companies to visit Sejong (and elsewhere in South Korea) to promote bi-lateral trade, collaboration and strengthen innovation eco-systems. A mission for Sejong companies to Belfast will also be facilitated by Invest NI and Sejong Technopark.
6. **Internet of Things** – Ulster University and Digital Catapult will work with Sejong to develop urban testbeds enabled by 5G, with applications in the fintech and health-tech sectors.
7. **Pathway to Net Zero** – Translink and Sejong partners will explore innovative technologies to support ambitions to be carbon positive by 2040.
8. In addition to these proposals, Sejong also wish to explore **tourism collaboration**. The city plans to open a new national museum in 2025, and officials are keen for Belfast to be represented in the museum. Officials from Sejong are travelling to Belfast in June to engage with Titanic Belfast, Ulster Museum, Belfast Stories and Belfast 2024. While tourism as a theme sits outside of the roadmap, it is something that Sejong has placed great emphasis on, and is expected to form part of the content of the Lord Mayor's visit.

3.4	<p><b>The Lord Mayor’s mission to Sejong</b></p> <p>The primary purpose of the mission is for the mayors of both cities to sign the Innovation Twins roadmap as a basis for further development. The mission, which is fully funded under the terms of the Innovation Twins programme, is planned for <b>25 April to 1 May</b>. The Lord Mayor will be accompanied by the Chief Executive, the Climate Commissioner; and an Innovation Broker from the City Innovation Team.</p>
3.5	<p>Invitations have also been extended to Catalyst, Queen’s University, Ulster University and the Digital Catapult. The visit will also be supported by Invest NI’s South Korean office and officials from the Connected Places Catapult. Members should note that Connected Places Catapult funding may also be made available to accompanying organisations to support their travel to Sejong.</p>
3.6	<p>The official itinerary is still being finalised with Sejong officials but it will include a unique visit to the South Korea Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) and visits to a number of centres that have contributed to making South Korea a powerhouse of the global economy. These include the Electronics and Telecommunications Research Institute, the Autonomous Vehicle Big Data Control Centre, the Smart City Centre, Korea University, the Hongik Maker Land, the Sejong Centre for Creative Economy &amp; Innovation and Sejong Technopark which works directly with South Korean SMEs to commercialise research and innovation.</p>
3.7	<p>Members are asked to note the outline itinerary for the Lord Mayor’s Innovation Twins mission. And Members are also asked to approve the signing by the Lord Mayor of the Innovation Twins roadmap as a basis for further direct and bi-lateral development work with Sejong.</p>
3.8	<p><b>Belfast’s Digital Healthcare Technology Accelerator</b></p> <p>Ulster University is preparing a major bid to the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council’s ‘Place-based Innovation Accelerator Account’ to create a Belfast-based Digital Healthcare Technology Accelerator that aims to build innovation capacity amongst the local digital health care cluster by encouraging more collaboration with university researchers, clinicians and directly with communities.</p>
3.9	<p>Ulster University is requesting a letter of support from Belfast City Council that would include making an in-principle commitment to the programme with in-kind staff time to the value of £100,000 over four years and to work with City Deal partners to develop a potential complementary challenge fund aimed at stimulating innovation amongst Belfast region health tech SMEs.</p>

3.10	Members are asked to approve a letter of support from Belfast City Council, with any final decision in commitment being subject to the terms of the winning bid and approval by a future Committee.
3.11	<p><b>Systems approaches to the transition to net zero</b></p> <p>Queen’s University has been engaging with the City Innovation Office on a potential £5 million bid to UKRI for a five-year research programme that will focus on opportunities and barriers to achieving net zero across urban systems such as transport, health, housing, etc.</p>
3.12	Surrey University is lead applicant with Queen’s while other partners include Oxford University, University College London, Newcastle and Birmingham. The deadline for an outline application is 26 March. If successful, applicants will then be invited to develop their bid further for final submission (at which point an update will be brought back to committee on the bid and the potential role of Belfast City Council).
3.13	<p><b>All-Island Smart Cities Network</b></p> <p>Belfast City Council was a founding member of a smart cities forum in 2017 that now includes most large town and cities on the island of Ireland. (Derry and Strabane and Newry Mourne and Down Councils are also members). The forum was set up to share and promote smart cities practice and to work on joint projects and funding bids. For example, the City Innovation Office worked with Smart Dublin on a successful €800,000 Last mile delivery challenge competition in 2019.</p>
3.14	Membership of the Forum requires in-person attendance at a small number of workshops in Dublin usually on a quarterly basis. Members are asked to approve this travel.
3.15	<p><b>City Hall immersive experience</b></p> <p>Members should note that work continues with BT on the development of the City Hall immersive experience that will sensitively complement elements of the existing exhibition. This experimental project, which aims to open from mid-autumn as part of Belfast 2024’s programme, is being developed with the City Innovation Office, Belfast 2024, and the Functions and Exhibitions team.</p>
3.16	Under a collaborative agreement, BT are investing significant R&D resources into the experience while the Council is benefiting from working alongside of the UK’s most creative multi-media companies specialising in heritage sectors. Members are asked to note progress on the development of the experience and that details on the proposed experience will be presented to Committee in the coming months.

	<b>Financial &amp; Resource Implications</b>
3.17	Unless otherwise noted below, budgets for the initiatives noted above are funded via third-party sources, with any Council contributions identified within the existing City Innovation Office and Belfast Region City Deal budgets.
3.18	Council travel costs for Sejong are covered by a grant received from Connected Places Catapult for the Innovation Twins programme.
	<b>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</b>
3.19	None.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	None