



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Easter Retail and Hospitality Campaign
Date:	11 March, 2009
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Relevant Background Information

Members are aware of the current economic crisis and its impact. While Belfast will be challenged by the crisis, parts of the economy have a number of opportunities which may assist them in surviving and remaining strong despite the situation.

In November last year, the Lord Mayor hosted a dinner with members of the Belfast Chamber of Commerce, Belfast City Centre Management and the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau to look at how the Christmas period could be enhanced. This produced a number of ideas and actions, which assisted greatly in making the Christmas period a relatively successful one for retail and tourism. Given the number of jobs and income stream associated with these sectors, this was an important initiative. Following this success a meeting was recently convened with the same stakeholders plus officers from Belfast City Council to look at creating a targeted year long campaign for the retail and hospitality sectors.

The first part of the campaign is to feature Easter.

Key Issues

The discussion revolved around using the already existing resources/assets of the City to produce a year long campaign to encourage people to visit and shop in the City.

Three key periods were defined: Easter, the Summer season (in particular, the Tall Ships event) and the Christmas period (kicking off with Halloween).

Given the short timescale, the first meeting concentrated on the Easter period and further planning sessions will flesh out a strong plan for later in the year, which will be brought to Committee.

In relation to Easter, the theme “The Belfast Bunny” was agreed as a “hook” to get visitors and shoppers into the City. The concept of the welcoming Belfast Bunny will be used to create media stories, brand the City and promote the idea of a vital, hopping Belfast in the Easter period and will sit beside the Titanic Festival and other activities going on over the period.

The Chamber, BCCM and BVCB will work with Council Officers to promote the campaign. Modification of the Belfast B to include a bunny has begun and a launch for the campaign is being planned. Members are asked to consider sponsorship of the campaign with £25K to cover the costs of additional promotional materials, banners and activities. BVCB and BCCM will “bend” their existing advertising and promotional campaigns to fit with the theme.

The Belfast Bunny campaign will not be restricted to the City Centre but all the trader organisations and arterial routes plus providers, such as the Zoo, will be encouraged to be part of the process.

Resource Implications

£25K towards costs of additional promotional materials and activities.

Recommendations

Members to agree to approve £25K towards costs of the Easter Retail and Hospitality Campaign.

Abbreviations

Council – Belfast City Council
BCCM – Belfast City Centre Management
BVCB – Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau