



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Festivals Forum Action Plan
Date:	11 August 2010
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459

Relevant Background Information

As Members are aware, at the Arts Sub-Committee meeting on 6 August 2004, the Committee agreed to the establishment of a Festivals Forum. The Forum was set up in recognition of the contribution festivals can make to Belfast in terms of promoting economic regeneration, driving tourism and enhancing community relations.

In 2009-2010 Belfast City Council invested approximately £750,000 into festivals across the city through the Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit (Community Festivals Fund and Annual/Multi-Annual Fund) and Good Relations Unit (Peace III City of Festivals Fund). Festivals and events are identified as a development lever to attract visitors to Belfast within the new draft Belfast integrated Strategic Tourism Framework 2010–14.

The Festivals Forum provides a mechanism for the Council to engage with festivals in order to grow and develop the city's festival offering.

The Forum currently has over 120 members from a wide range of community, arts and heritage organisations. It meets quarterly to share information and discuss strategic and citywide issues. Achievements of the Festivals Forum to date include the development of a Belfast Festivals Calendar, disseminated throughout Northern Ireland in January and June each year, and the delivery of tailored skills development and training courses, designed to build capacity within festival organisations.

The Festivals Action Plan for 2010 was agreed at the February Forum meeting and is attached at Appendix 1. A £30,000 budget for the Festivals Action Plan has been included in the Departmental budget for 2010–11. An additional £20,000 is to be requested from PEACE III to implement specific actions from the Peace III City of Festivals programme, including the development of a Festivals Charter and cross-border networking.

Key objectives for the Festivals Forum in 2010 include developing a strategy for festivals across the city which will outline how best to: maximise opportunities including the Titanic centenary; work with funders such as Peace III to ensure there is mutual understanding of aims and objectives of funders and festival organisers; and identify more opportunities to work in partnership to ensure better efficiencies.

Key Issues

Neither the Festivals Forum nor individual member organisations have the resources to deliver the Festivals Action Plan. Belfast City Council is not in a position to recruit additional staff. The Forum agreed that in order to ensure the successful implementation of the Festivals Action Plan, they would require additional resources, specifically a Festivals Development Co-ordinator.

The engagement of a co-ordinator would ensure that the full potential of Belfast as a city of festivals is exploited. The co-ordinator would be charged with the strategic development of the Festivals Forum and of festivals within the city in line with the priorities identified in the Action Plan.

It is anticipated that the co-ordinator will be contracted full-time from December 2010 to June 2011 inclusive (based on timescales for Peace III spend). The budget of £50,000 will cover the co-ordinator costs, overheads and include an operational budget to implement the Action Plan.

The co-ordinator will be appointed through open competition, contracted by Belfast City Council on behalf of the Festivals Forum and managed by the Forum's Strategy Subgroup, which consists of representatives from the Council's Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit, ArtsEkta, Culturlann, Festival of Fools and Open House Festival. The co-ordinator will be based in the office of one of the festival providers.

A letter requesting this support from Michele Devlin, Chair of the Festivals Forum and Director of Belfast Film Festival, is included at Appendix 2.

Resource ImplicationsFinancial

£30,000 towards the implementation of the Festivals Action Plan has been included in the Departmental budget for 2010–11.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee agrees to the Festivals Action Plan including the appointment of a Festivals Development Co-ordinator.

Decision Tracking

Further to Members' agreement, a report will be prepared and submitted to the Good Relations Partnership in September.

Timeframe: September 2010

Reporting Officer: Kerrie Sweeney

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 - Festivals Action Plan 2010

Appendix 2 - Letter of support from Festivals Forum