



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	New York-New Belfast Conference
Date:	13 April 2011
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that the first New York-New Belfast conference took place in New York in June 2010. A follow-up conference is being planned for June 2011. Belfast City Council has been asked to consider its engagement in the conference programme.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The New York-New Belfast conference 2011 will bring together a range of representatives from the key organisations within the two cities that are responsible for promoting economic regeneration and business growth.
2.2	The conference will focus on promoting positive messages about the city of Belfast, maximising the linkages between New York and Belfast and capitalising on the social capital networks that exist in the USA.
2.3	The conference partners are Fordham University, Continental Airlines, Tourism Ireland and Titanic Quarter. The conference chairs include the actress Geraldine Hughes and John Connorton, the New York Head Friend of the Friends in Belfast network which was established by Belfast City Council in the 1990s.
2.4	<p>The conference programme will involve a range of workshop sessions including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Belfast as a global hotspot for talent– The compelling cultural proposition of Belfast– The opportunities for expanding the alternative energy industry in Belfast. <p>The conference lunch will include an award ceremony to honour 30 top companies with operations in the US and Ireland.</p>
2.5	<p>Belfast City Council has been asked to consider sponsorship of the conference at a cost of £3000. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Opportunity to present in one of the conference sessions– 2 delegate places

2.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sponsorship of an award at the conference luncheon - Opportunity to display materials and information stands, as well as material in the delegate packs - Inclusion of an article in the conference supplement. <p>Engagement in the event offers the opportunity to capitalise on some of the issues raised during the recent “State of the City” workshops. Successive speakers, including John Palmieri of Boson Redevelopment Authority and Bruce Katz of Brookings Institute, have drawn attention to a number of international approaches which merit further investigation. Equally, they have pointed to the potential of the social capital linkages that exist in the US and have stressed the opportunities available for exploiting these to deliver new economic benefit of the city.</p> <p>Members may recall that BCC established a social capital network called Friends of Belfast in the late 1990’s which comprised over 350 high profile business, academic and civic leaders in the USA who committed to supporting Belfast via providing contacts and assisting the city access opportunities for investment and promotion in USA. Members may now consider it appropriate to re-ignite the international opportunities which such a network and other contacts recently presented to BCC provide. Several of the Friends of Belfast still exist in New York and remain committed to supporting economic development opportunities in Belfast. Members may wish to make formal contact with them through this conference and through a parallel programme of meetings.</p>
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3	Resource Implications
3.1	Sponsorship of the event will cost £3,000. Travel and accommodation costs for conference participants will be in addition to this sum. It is suggested that these should not exceed £1,500.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are no specific Equality and Good Relations Considerations issues attached to this report.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are asked to note the proposal for sponsorship of the event at a cost of £3,000 and to agree to participation in the event by Chair and Deputy Chair of Development Committee and 2 staff – the total cost of participation should not exceed £9,000.

6	Decision Tracking
A report on the conference will be presented at the August Development Committee.	
Timeframe: August 2011	Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay