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| Report to: | Development Committee |
| Subject: | World Trade Centre Licence Renewal |
| Date: | 8 November 2011 |
| Reporting Officer: | John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470 |
| Contact Officers: | Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459 |

| 1 | Relevant Background Information |
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| 1.1 | Belfast City Council acquired the licence for World Trade Centre Belfast (WTCB) in 2003 in partnership with property development company AM Development (since then re-named Multi Development). |
| 1.2 | At that stage, Multi Development had expressed an interest in acquiring the land at Musgrave Street Police Station and developing a World Trade Centre (WTC) on that site. When it became apparent that the land was not going to be made available, the development company agreed to allow Belfast City Council to purchase their 50% of the licence. Since 2008, the Council has been the 100% licence holder. |
| 1.3 | There are approximately 300 WTCs across all continents. Around 200 of these operate virtually i.e. do not have a physical presence. For those that do operate from a building, this can take many forms, including office space, hotels and conference centres. WTCs are operated by both private and public operators. |
| 1.4 | Four cities in the UK have licences for WTCs, namely Belfast, Milton Keynes, Hull and Edinburgh. Of these, only Hull operates from a branded World Trade Centre (WTC Hull and Humber). A world trade centre is now operational in Dublin. |
| 1.5 | Belfast City Council holds the only licence in Northern Ireland. There is an annual fee for holding the licence and this is currently set at \$10,000. |

| 2 | Key Issues |
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| 2.1 | <p>As the licence holder, the Council developed and delivered a series of pilot activities under the banner of WTC. These have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Global Business Skills workshops – 4 workshops, each attracting at least 15 participants. These workshops have been on issues such as “Global Sourcing” and “Trade Documentation” - Business Development Programmes – 10 Belfast-based businesses took part in our buy:make:sell global programme. This helped them build or enhance their international supply chains - Channel Development Clinics: 12 companies took part in this workshop series designed to give first time exporters practical information on how to sell products or services into new markets outside of Northern Ireland. - Trade Mission – a trade mission to Futurallia in Doha, Qatar, was organised in conjunction with Invest NI. 11 companies took part. To date, one company has secured international orders, another has organised a new distribution agreement and one company has secured two new clients. The other companies continue to pursue leads developed from the event. |
| 2.2 | <p>Consideration was also given to a membership structure but the administration involved in this made it prohibitive, given the available resources within council at the time.</p> |
| 2.3 | <p>These programmes were match funded by the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment (DETI). However given changes in the business support environment, a review of the services at that time indicated that there would be merit in “packaging” these services as part of the wider EDU offering, linking into other export support services e.g. from Northern Ireland Chamber and Invest NI. Other private organisations operating international trade services have also expressed an interest in accessing the facilities offered by the licence and there is the potential to explore this in more detail as a source of income for Belfast City Council.</p> |
| 2.4 | <p>With regard to the property options, there have been a number of discussions with potential developers to assess potential interest in developing a World Trade Centre in the city. While they did express some interest at that time, it would be important to refresh this process, given the changed economic climate since the earlier interventions.</p> |
| 2.5 | <p>There is also the potential to explore options for deploying the branding on some of the council’s assets. Members will recall that approval has recently been granted to progress an application for external support for the extension of the Waterfront Hall to incorporate a new conference and exhibition centre. Other cities e.g. Boston have branded their conference facilities as “World Trade Centre” and have brought together a range of related facilities and services under this umbrella. The opportunity exists to explore a similar model for the Belfast development.</p> |
| 2.6 | <p>Members have also asked that we explore the potential for an international marketing and promotion strategy for the city and the WTC network and branding could be a useful resource in the delivery of this strategy.</p> |

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| 3 | Resource Implications |
| 3.1 | <u>Financial</u> In order to maintain the licence and ensure that we have access to the branding, resources and facilities, an annual fee of \$10,000 will be payable to the World Trade Centres Association. The amount has been set aside within the EDU financial provisions for the current financial year. |

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| 4 | Equality and Good Relations Considerations |
| 4.1 | There are no specific equality and good relations considerations attached to this report. |

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| 5 | Recommendations |
| 5.1 | Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the update on the WTC membership - Agree the payment of the annual membership fee of \$10,000. |

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| 6 | Decision Tracking |
| Progress report on outcomes will be presented to Committee in June 2012. | |
| Timeframe: June 2012 | Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay |

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| 7 | Key to Abbreviations |
| WTC – World Trade Centre WTCB – World Trade Centre Belfast EDU – Economic Development Unit DETI – Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment | |