



Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Belfast Business Awards
Date:	22 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
1.1	The Belfast Business Awards is an annual awards scheme comprising 21 award categories specifically aimed at recognising and rewarding business excellence in the city.
1.2	The Belfast Business Awards have been running since 2004 – initially as a project led by Belfast City Centre Management Company (BCCM) in conjunction with Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce (BCTC). The current management structure for the business awards event (in place since 2010) is that the Council is the lead delivery agent supported by Belfast City Centre Management (BCCM) as organising partner. BCCM is paid a fixed sum for its role in this work, in addition to the core funding that it receives from Council each year. An event management company is contracted by BCCM to undertake all relevant duties in preparation for the event and on the evening itself.
1.3	The awards offer an opportunity to acknowledge the importance that the Council attaches to supporting a dynamic, competitive private sector in the city. They are also a means of rewarding excellence among local companies.
1.4	While the Belfast Business Awards is one significant awards scheme in which the Council is engaged, there are a number of others including Fair Trade Awards, Brighter Belfast Awards etc. Given the current challenging economic climate and the significant volume of work involved in each of these events, Members may wish to consider bringing together some of these awards programmes, in a way that does not impact adversely on the integrity and value of the awards themselves.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The 2011 Belfast Business Awards attracted over 220 entries across 21 categories. This represented an increase of almost 40% on entries in the previous year. Some categories were more heavily subscribed than others. The awards event in April 2011 attracted around 380 guests, all of whom paid for participation at the event. The event was oversubscribed.
2.2	Feedback from participants – particularly participating businesses – suggests that they value the awards and that they use their award as part of their promotional activity.
2.3	Feedback from sponsors indicates that they see value in their association with the event. As might be expected in the current climate, the challenge of identifying sponsorship for 21 awards (as well as principal sponsor funding) was significant and there were 4 categories that were sponsored by Belfast City Council in the absence of other funders.
2.4	With regard to the format of the event, the last two ceremonies have taken place in the City Hall and this is widely viewed as an environment which is conducive to such an event and which elevates the Council role in the awards.
2.5	Although three new award categories were added last year, feedback suggests that there may be merit in reducing the number of categories as 21 appeared to be too many in terms of ensuring that proceedings ran smoothly on the evening.
2.6	With regard to the timing of the event, although the April date was widely seen as being popular, the planning timeframes required for such an event would suggest that it may be more appropriate to consider an Autumn event in 2012.
2.7	Finally, there are a number of other award schemes in which the Council is involved and which involve business categories. There may be merit in exploring the opportunities for integrating these with the Belfast Business Awards in the future. It is also considered that the working relationship with Belfast City Centre Management is useful and should be maintained as part of the 2012 event, should it proceed.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	<u>Financial</u> In 2011 the costs of delivering the awards amounted to £80,000. These costs were met by a combination of Belfast City Council funding (£20,000), sponsorship income from principal and category sponsors and ticket sales. There was a small underspend due to support being provided in kind and to a reduction in certain costs. It is anticipated that the budget for an event in 2012 would be broadly similar to the 2011 event. A management fee of £9,000 was paid to BCCM in addition to this amount.

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

5	Recommendations
	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the update on the Belfast Business Awards - Agree to the proposal for a 2012 Belfast Business Awards and to exploring the potential for involving the business elements of other awards schemes in which the Council is engaged. - Approve a budget of up to £29,000 to cover financial contribution and management fee to BCCM, if appropriate.

6	Decision Tracking
<p>Progress report on outcomes to be presented to Committee in September 2012.</p> <p>Timeframe: September 2012 Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay</p>	

7	Key to Abbreviations
<p>BCCM – Belfast City Centre Management BCTC – Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce.</p>	