



Report to: Development Committee

Subject: Sister City Nashville

Date: 21 February 2012

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	<p>Members will be aware that A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Mayor of Nashville and the Lord Mayor of Belfast in 1994 to promote cultural, tourism and business development opportunities between the two cities. The connection with Nashville has a special significance because of the very strong links between Ulster and the Tennessee capital. The region's connection with Tennessee dates from the Scots-Irish settlement of the area in the eighteenth century to the diverse relationships, cultural and economic ties that link Belfast and Nashville today.</p>
1.2	<p>At a meeting of the Development Committee on 12 May 2010, approval and budget was given to develop the Nashville Sister City relationship and 2010/11 Action Plan and its implementation. Members will also be aware that new partnerships were formed to deliver the Belfast Nashville 2010/11 Action Plan, which was greatly expanded to include not only culture and tourism, but education, economic development, genealogy, literary tourism, music tourism, international exhibitions, international marketing, creative industries, film and digital media and communications. Group membership has been expanded to reflect the new plan. The relationship between the two cities has been greatly strengthened with a focus on achieving maximum economic benefits for Belfast. A considerable number of partner organisations contributed both financially and in kind to sustaining the relationship, including Tourism Ireland, US Consulate, BBC, Queen's University and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland. Please see Appendix 1 for full details.</p>
1.3	<p><u>Nashville Music Council and Chamber of Commerce</u> This was established by the Mayor's Office in order to spearhead economic development efforts that capitalise on Nashville's identity as Music City. They have agreed to develop a stronger relationship with Belfast in relation to music development, joint showcasing, exchange models of best practice in order to generate economic return for both cities.</p>

1.4	<p><u>Nashville Visitor and Convention Bureau (NVCB)</u> The NVCB received a presentation from Belfast City Council and have agreed to work in partnership with the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau (BVCB) in order to maximise the international promotion of both cities. They provided marketing, print, distribution and online marketing support for the delegation visit and music showcases and shared best practice on the creation of a music city.</p>
1.5	<p><u>Tourism/Music Tourism</u> Council worked in partnership with Tourism Ireland to utilize the Sister City Linkage to profile Belfast as a cultural tourism destination in the Southern States and increase tourism revenue from this market. Tourism Ireland worked with their offices across the United States to highlight the music showcase events and promoted the event to travel and music journalists. They marketed Belfast City Council's new music products to promote Belfast as a vibrant European destination and the gateway to Ireland and Europe. They are currently promoting Titanic Belfast via the Sister Cities network.</p>
1.6	<p><u>Genealogy</u> Belfast City Council partnered with the Ulster Historical Foundation to create the Belfast Nashville Historical and Genealogical Connections Booklet and Guide to researching family and history in Belfast. This was in order to profile cultural and historical links between the two cities and target the Scots-Irish community in the Southern States as potential holiday visitors.</p>
1.7	<p><u>Creative Industries</u> Supported by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, musicians performed showcases and public concerts with high profile singer-songwriters from Nashville. The showcases were attended by Nashville's music industry professionals including publishers, record companies and agents. It was also supported by Mayor Dean, the Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Sister City Representatives and music journalists. Increased the number of Belfast musicians doing business internationally and resulted in new Management and Publishing deals for the artists.</p>
1.8	<p><u>Education</u> Members will be aware that a formal relationship has been established between Queen's University and Vanderbilt University which has resulted in international research collaborations, student and lecturer exchanges and facilitated connections between schools, departments, and offices to promote internationalisation. Please see Appendix 2 for full details.</p>

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>In light of discussions to develop an International Relations Strategy and position the city's relationship with Nashville within this context as well as other competing priorities in 2011/12 period, the Belfast Nashville Steering Group did not meet in 2011, however partners, in particular Queen's University, have continued to strengthen ties with Sister City Nashville.</p>
2.2	<p>Approval is now sought from Members to review and realign Sister City Nashville objectives to the new Investment Strategy and Development Departmental Plan and to review the current Belfast Nashville Steering Group. It is envisaged that the Nashville Steering Group funding partners would be brought together to input into these discussions.</p>

2.3	Council have also been notified that, following an invitation from Titanic Belfast, Mayor Dean of Nashville and a delegation plan to visit in April 2012 to attend the opening celebrations. Further to this, Council has received an invitation from Queen's University to accompany their delegation for an outward visit to Nashville in Autumn 2012. Please see Appendix 3. The purpose of the visit is for Vanderbilt to host a festival of creativity involving writers in the Seamus Heaney Centre and colleagues working in the Creative Arts at Queen's. The showcasing and marketing opportunity would enable Belfast to be profiled in the Southern States as a thriving, vibrant and distinctive city and facilitates Belfast's repositioning as an international tourism destination. It would also provide an opportunity for our Creative Industries, increases the artists ability to do business on a global stage by targeting key international markets, increasing sales and attracting investment. It is recommended that Members await the new International Strategy before decision is taken.
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3	Resource Implications
3.1	<u>Civic Visit</u> £1500 towards civic visit in April 2012.
3.2	<u>The proposed visit to Nashville during the Autumn of 2012</u> Costs per person for a three person delegation for three nights are estimated as follows: Flights: £650 - £750 Accommodation: £300 (mid range hotel) Advance Subsistence: £225 (three full days)

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	A new action plan would be subject to an Equality Screening Exercise in line with Council's own Equality Scheme.

5	Recommendations
5.1	It is recommended that Members; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the contents of this report 2. To review and realign Sister City Nashville objectives to Belfast City Council's Investment Programme 3. To review the current Belfast Nashville Steering Group 4. To approve an inward Civic Visit from Mayor Dean and delegation in April 2012 and to host a reception to include Chair, Deputy Chair and Development Committee, at a cost of no more than £1,500 which has been provided within the Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit budget. 5. To accept the invitation from QUB to participate in the Autumn visit to Nashville and agree the attendance of the Chair and Deputy Chair, or their nominees, and one member of staff.

6	Decision Tracking
Further to approval, an update report will be brought to Committee.	
Timeframe:	June 2012
Reporting Officer:	Shirley McCay

7	Documents Attached
Appendix 1 - Background to Sister City Nashville and Belfast Nashville Steering Group Appendix 2 - 2010 Action Plan Appendix 3 - Letter from Queen's University	

