



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Digital Hub update
Date:	Tuesday 26 June 2012
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development ext 3470
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that the Belfast City Council Investment Programme 2012-15 sets out a package of measures to help address the impact of the economic downturn across Belfast and to capitalise on the city's growing reputation as a choice for foreign direct investment and a top tourism and cultural destination.
1.2	Specific proposals include establishing a Digital Hub – a proposed £4m investment to promote digital technology based enterprises in the city. Belfast City Council has been playing a key role in the development of the creative industries since 2004, (with a key focus on film, television, digital media, music and design) and the sector has been identified as a priority area of work for the Council's Economic Development team and as such have been involved in numerous discussions to drive this development forward.

2	Key Issues
2.1	Both the NI Economic Strategy and Belfast City Council have identified the creative industries as making important contributions to the NI economy and are recognised drivers of wider economic and social innovation. Over the past number of months, meetings have taken place with representatives from both the public and private sector to identify key areas of development and support, Belfast City Council should prioritise and take the lead on.
2.2	A key project that was highlighted was that of the development of a hub for the digital / creative industries. It was agreed that there is an opportunity to explore the development an international centre of excellence for creativity, culture and innovation in Belfast, focusing on the priority creative enterprises of film, television, music, digital content and art and design.
2.3	Preliminary discussions have taken place between officials from Belfast City Council (BCC); the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL); the Office of the First and deputy First Minister (OFMDFM); the Department for Social Development (DSD); and Invest NI.

2.4	As a result of these discussions, it was agreed that that a more detailed examination of the digital hub proposal was required with the commissioning of a formal feasibility study.
2.5	The feasibility study will provide Belfast City Council the necessary information as to what the best options are available to us in moving this project forward, including locations, possible partners, finance options and service delivery.
2.6	The final study will provide Belfast City Council with the key information which will be used to form an application for match finance to be submitted to Invest Northern Ireland and the European Regional Development Fund under the competitiveness programme.

3	Resource Implications
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3.1	<p>Financial</p> <p>Members are asked to approve up to £20,000 towards the commission of a framework study with a digital / creative hub for Belfast.</p>
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4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
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4.1	No specific equality and good relations implications.
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5	Recommendations
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5.1	<p>Members are asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Note the contents of the report. – Approve the proposed activity and associated budget.
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6	Key to Abbreviations
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BCC	–	Belfast City Council
DCAL	–	Department of Cultural, Arts and Leisure
OFMDFM	–	Office of the First and Deputy First Minister
DSD	–	Department for Social Development

7	Documents Attached
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