



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Visit from delegation from Hefei, China
<b>Date:</b>	Tuesday 26 June 2012
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3459

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	Members will be aware that, over the last decade, the cities of Belfast and Hefei have been developing linkages. These culminated in the signature of a Sister Cities relationship between the two cities in 2005. A number of visits and exchanges between the cities have taken place and new relationships continue to develop. The most recent visit in February 2011 coordinated by the Chinese Welfare Association (CWA) as part of the Chinese New Year celebrations.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	An action plan for the development of linkages between the cities was approved by the Committee in September 2008. This included a range of actions under the following headings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Business Development and Investment.</li><li>- Education and training.</li><li>- Enhancing links with the Chinese community in Belfast.</li><li>- Cultural awareness.</li></ul>
2.2	Currently work has commenced on a new International relations framework which is renewing existing relations.
2.3	In addition, a range of activities has also been delivered to encourage business linkages with the wider Chinese market. Most recently a 'Doing Business in China' information event was held in Belfast City Hall, organised by Belfast City Council in conjunction with the University of Ulster, to launch The Confucius Institute at the university's Jordanstown campus. The event focused on promoting China as a place to do business and the university was keen to illustrate how the Confucius Institute could support local companies interested in trading in the Chinese market. The event was attended by 32 individuals representing a range of local companies.

2.4	Given the increasing drive to support export development and the continuing importance of the Chinese market, a number of organisations are actively promoting trade and business links – as well as cultural, educational and research connections. Key partners in this regard are Invest Northern Ireland, Queen’s University and The British Council.
2.5	The International Office from Hefei City has recently made contact with a view to organising a brief visit to Belfast as part of a wider visit to Europe in September/October this year. The delegation from Hefei will be attending the 8 <sup>th</sup> World Technopolis Association (WTA) General Summary meeting in Gliwice, Poland and had expressed an interest in a visit to Belfast in advance of this event.
2.6	At this stage, it is suggested that the delegation will comprise the following representatives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mr. Chu Zhaoping, Vice Chairman of Hefei Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference</li> <li>- Ms. Zhu Dali, Deputy Secretary-General of Hefei Municipal Government and Executive Deputy Director of Hefei Administrative Centre</li> <li>- Mr. Fu Nianfeng, Consultant, General Office of Hefei Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference</li> <li>- Mr. Qi Qiang, Vice President of Hefei No 4 People’s Hospital</li> <li>- Mr. Li Zeyou, President of Anhui Changzheng Minimally Invasive Surgery Hospital</li> <li>- Mr. Wang Jiwan, Commissioner for WTA Affairs in Hefei.</li> </ul>
2.7	The delegation has expressed an interest in focusing discussions as part of their visit on city development. In addition, given that the delegation includes two representatives from the Hefei medical community, an interest has also been expressed in visiting care homes for the elderly.
2.8	While the final dates for the visit have not yet been confirmed, it is proposed that Members support a visit programme to allow the delegation to meet relevant people in Belfast and that, as part of this programme, provision is made for some civic hospitality. The International Office in Hefei has confirmed that the delegation will cover their own travel and accommodation costs.

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	<u>Financial</u> While the final details of the duration of the visit is not known at this stage, it is suggested that a budget of £1,000 should cover all overheads associated with this visit.
3.2	<u>Human Resources</u> The work required will be undertaken by existing staff resources.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	No specific equality or good relations implications to this report.

<b>5</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
None.	

<b>6</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- approve the allocation of up to £1,000 towards civic hospitality as part of the civic visit by Hefei;</li><li>- agree that Members of the Development Committee attend any specific civic event arranged for the Hefei delegates.</li></ul>	