



<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Festivals Forum Action Plan
<b>Date:</b>	21 August 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	The Council agreed to establish a Festivals' Forum in August 2004. The Forum was set up in recognition of the contribution festivals can make to Belfast in terms of promoting economic regeneration, driving tourism and enhancing community relations.
1.2	In 2011/2012 Belfast City Council's Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit invested over £400,000 into festivals across the city. This investment has been further bolstered in 2012/13 by £300,000 under the City of Festivals Phase 2 programme (supported under the Belfast PEACE III Plan by the European Union's European Regional Development Fund through the PEACE III Programme), which has awarded money to festivals including the Belfast Children's Festival, Féile, Festival of Fools and Orangefest to develop audiences among hard-to-reach groups and communities.
1.3	Investing in a City of Festivals is identified as a priority under the Investment Programme 2012–15. The draft Cultural Framework for Belfast 2012–15 further recognises the city's varied and extensive festivals calendar as a strength, acknowledges the role festivals play in inspiring communities and commits to continuing to promote city of festivals as a key message for the city.
1.4	The Festivals Forum provides a mechanism for the Council to engage with festivals in order to support and enhance the city's festival offering. The Forum currently has over 100 members from a wide range of community, arts and heritage organisations. All festivals applying for grant aid for Council are invited to become members. It meets bi-monthly to share information and discuss strategic and citywide issues. Achievements of the Festivals Forum to date include joined-up billboard and banner fields campaigns promoting Belfast as a city of festivals; training courses and events, including a cross-border networking day; and a new ticketing-system pilot. A copy of the Festivals Forum Charter, which details the purpose, vision and principles of the Forum, is included at appendix 1.

1.5	A £30,000 budget for the Festivals Forum has been included in the Departmental budget for 2012/13. An additional £20,000 has been secured from PEACE III to implement specific actions from the Peace III City of Festivals programme, including cross-border networking, evaluation and training and skills development.
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<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	Since its establishment in 2006, the Forum has developed and grown. It has office bearers and subgroups that work voluntarily, and the Council also contributes staff time. However, as its remit and membership continues to expand, the Forum would like to hire staff to support it further. This is currently not possible as the Forum is not a legal entity. As a result, the Forum has asked for assistance in exploring the feasibility of it becoming a legally constituted organisation independent from the Council. A feasibility study has therefore been included in the draft Action Plan at appendix 1.
2.2	Other key objectives and actions in the Action Plan include: ongoing support for the billboard marketing campaign; a series of shared resources to share knowledge and promote best practice; and training and skills development.
2.3	Members are requested to note the contents of this report and agree the Festivals Forum Action Plan 2012/13.

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	<u>Financial</u> £30,000 towards the implementation of the Festivals Forum Action Plan has been included in the Departmental budget for 2012/13.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	There are no Equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	It is recommended that Members note the contents of this report and agree the Festivals Forum Action Plan 2012/13.

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
There is no Decision Tracking attached to this report.	

<b>7</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
Appendix 1 - Festivals Forum Charter Appendix 2 - Festivals Forum Action Plan 2012/13	