



Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Sister city link with Hefei, China - update
Date:	2 October 2012
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that Belfast City Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the city of Hefei in August 2001, committing the two cities to 'friendly exchange and co-operative activities' within a number of themes including education, technology and culture.
1.2	A number of visits have taken place by delegations from Hefei to Belfast and, on one occasion (2003), a civic delegation from Belfast undertook a visit to Hefei to meet with government contacts and to attend the annual hi-tech fair in the city.
1.3	A small delegation from the city of Hefei visited Belfast in early September 2012 and expressed an interest in re-invigorating the link between the two cities. This included an invitation to visit Hefei again at a future date.

2	Key Issues
2.1	Hefei is the capital city of Anhui Province in China - located in the mid-east of China. It is an industrial city with fast growing potential, with a population of approximately 6 million people within the wider metropolitan area. The city core has experienced significant population growth over the last decade, doubling in size between 2000 and 2010.
2.2	Hefei is listed among the top 50 cities in terms of its investment environment and is listed within the top 30 cities in terms of its growth potential. Currently the Anhui region trades with over 180 countries and 51 of the Fortune 500 companies have invested in Hefei including Johnson, Unilever, Sanyo etc.
2.3	Hefei has been progressing vigorously in the development of scientific and technological undertakings over the last thirty years. It was designated the first Science and Technology Innovation Pilot City in China in 2004 (there are now 45 pilots) and the city is a member of the WTA (World Technopolis Association).

2.4	During the visit to Belfast in September 2012, the four delegates from Hefei undertook a series of visits and engaged in a number of meetings around city development and social care. They also met with members of the Chinese community in Belfast and with Invest NI's international trade team.
2.5	In the course of the meeting with Invest NI, the trade representatives expressed an interest in exploring the business opportunities presented in Hefei and have committed to researching this proposition further. Currently, Invest NI undertakes one trade mission a year to China and the next visit is in mid-November. Staff are considering whether it may be possible to undertake a brief visit to Hefei as part of this visit.
2.6	The Hefei delegation was keen to support a return visit to Hefei by a delegation from Belfast at a future date and has committed to putting together a programme based on the specific needs of the group. Given the review of international linkages that is currently underway, it may be appropriate to consider the future direction of the link with Hefei, including priority areas for collaboration, if appropriate.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	No specific resource allocations attached to this report – for information only.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	No specific equality and good relations considerations associated with this report.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Note the recent visit to Belfast by a delegation from Hefei – Consider the future direction of the link with Hefei, in the context of the review of international linkages and marketing currently underway.

6	Decision Tracking
There is no specific decision tracking attached to this report.	

7	Key to Abbreviations
MoU – Memorandum of Understanding	