



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	South by Southwest 2013
Date:	6 November 2012
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that Belfast City Council has been playing a key role in supporting the development of the creative industries in Belfast, since 2004, with a key focus on the film, television, digital media, music and design sectors.
1.2	A key project within this support plan has been participation at the South by Southwest (SXSW) music and media conference in Austin, Texas. SXSW is the premier global event focusing on the creative side of the music and entertainment business which takes place in Austin, Texas each year. It involves a conference and exhibition as well as a series of pre-arranged meetings and music shows. The 2013 event will be held from 12 to 17 March.
1.3	Over the course of the last three years, we have helped local musicians and music businesses to secure new contracts to the value of more than \$500,000 with international labels and publishing companies.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The creative industries have been identified in a number of recent economic strategies and studies as being central to the future economic growth of Northern Ireland. The majority of creative businesses are based in Belfast and recent investments in the creative infrastructure – e.g. opening of two new studios at Titanic Quarter, redevelopment of Paint Hall studios – are central to capitalising on this potential growth.

2.2	Belfast City Council's work in supporting creative businesses has focused on business development initiatives, capability development programmes and infrastructure investment. SXSU is a key business development initiative for companies in the priority sectors of Film, Television, Digital Media, Music and Design. We are currently looking at the potential of investing in the development of creative hub – as identified in the Investment Programme – and are carrying out a feasibility study to establish the demand and, if appropriate, identify the way forward, for this project.
2.3	In recent years, Belfast City Council has been part of a collaborative attendance at SXSU by partners from Northern Ireland. Other organisations taking part include Invest NI and the Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL). This has proved to be a cost-effective method of engagement and has enhanced the profile of the individual companies and organisations taking part.
2.4	Discussions are currently under way with DCAL, Invest NI and Digital Derry – an umbrella organisation bringing together infrastructure and production companies working in the digital sector in the city of Derry – with a view to planning a potential collaborative presence at SXSU in 2013. This will build on a similar collaboration at last year's event.
2.5	Members will recall that Council support for SXSU and other international initiatives for the sector was approved at the 21 August 2012 meeting of Development Committee. Council resources will be used to match the funding already in place from the other partners and will contribute towards costs for the hire of the exhibition stand, networking venue, PR, marketing and delegate passes.
2.6	In order to assess the impact of the Council's contribution towards the event, a series of outcomes and targets will be established in advance of the visit and reviewed after the event. This information will be used to inform where and how the Council should prioritise its resources for the sector in future years and will inform a funding application to Invest NI for match-funding support for this and other creative industries activities.
2.7	In order to maximise the benefits from the event, it is proposed that the Chair and Deputy Chair of Committee (or nominees) along with two officers attend the SXSU event.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	<u>Financial</u> Budget for SXSU engagement approved at 21 August 2012 Development Committee. It is recommended that, as part of this budget, funding be set aside for participation by the Chair and Deputy Chair of Development Committee (or nominees) along with two officers.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
	There are no specific equality and good relations considerations attached to this Report.

