



Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	400 th Anniversary of the Belfast Town Charter
Date:	20 November 2012
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, (ext 3470)
Contact Officers:	Ms Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, (ext 3459)

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	In October 2012, Council approved the Cultural Framework 2012–2015. The Framework promotes the themes Distinctly Belfast and Inspiring Communities, highlighting the importance that culture, arts and heritage plays in supporting Belfast to become a shared city. The Framework aims to achieve this by connecting people to the city, its stories, places, arts and heritage; and enabling people to value and understand their places; past and present.
1.2	‘Belfast 400’ offers Council an opportunity to launch a programme of heritage related initiatives from January to September 2013 that will support the vision and aims of the Cultural Framework 2012 – 2015.
1.3	On the 27 April 1613, Belfast received a charter which defined its area and established a Corporation; a direct ancestor of the current Council. It is a major identifiable date in the development of the City. 39 other towns across Ireland – 18 in Ulster – also received charters in this period. Belfast is one of the few places for which the original charter document survives.
1.4	This history is not universally recognised as being shared, however. The event is closely linked to the wider Plantation process and the process of ‘civilisation’ – a common theme across colonisation projects in this period. A report, taken to the Development Committee in June 2009 agreed that the Heritage Officer run a seminar looking at issues of commemoration held in November of that year. A number of distinguished speakers contributed and the discussion addressed issues of inclusiveness and appropriateness. There were presentations drawing on experience of the 400 th anniversary celebrations at Jamestown, Virginia, specifically from a native American point of view. Key lessons were captured to inform our approach in marking ‘Belfast 400’.
1.5	Within government, responsibility for a central role in charter commemoration has been given by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure to the Ministerial Group for Ulster-Scots (MAGUS). A small budget has been allocated and MAGUS has been in discussion with Foras na Gaeilge, among others. MAGUS has indicated that it might provide funding for an event, perhaps in City Hall, for all 40 towns across Ireland which received charters.

1.6	<p>Within Council programming has already commenced on the Decade of Centenaries, led by the Good Relations Unit and reporting to the Historic Centenaries Working Group. Principles developed by the Community Relations Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund for commemoration have been agreed for both Council run events and external organisation's events planned for the City Hall. These principles recognise the importance of inclusivity, acknowledging different perspectives and historical accuracy. The Decade of Centenaries covers the period 1912 – 1922. At an early stage in the discussions on this period of Belfast's history, it was agreed that the Charter fell outside the decade of centenaries and that the Development Department would lead on developing a programme of events to mark the Belfast charter in 1613 using the agreed principles referred to above.</p>
1.7	<p>Council is a partner with Queen's University and the University of Liverpool Press in the production of a new major history of Belfast called 'Belfast 400', which covers periods from prehistory to the present. This is well illustrated and at £14.99 for the paperback, is priced to be accessible. Copies will be given to members and to secondary schools. The launch will take place in January and provides an opportunity to launch a wider programme of activity under the banner 'Belfast 400'.</p>

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>The charter anniversary is a major event in Belfast's history. The recommendation is to run a series of events / specific initiatives from the period January-September 2013. An outline programme is attached in Appendix 1. For the past 10 years, the City Events Unit has delivered the Titanic Made in Belfast Festival which took place over the Easter Holiday period of 4 days in Belfast City Hall. The event in the past has attracted in the region of 10,000 each year. With the success of 2012 now coming to a close, the City Events Unit are keen to revamp the Easter event for 2013 and are keen to tie their programme of activity into the anniversary of the 1613 Charter.</p>
2.2	<p>A number of units across the Council would be involved in delivering the wider Belfast 400 programme including, but not limited to, Events Unit, Tourism Culture and Arts Unit, Lord Mayor's Office and Records Management Unit. Not all elements necessarily sit within the Development Department and the active support and collaboration of other areas of Council will be vital.</p>
2.3	<p>One of the key themes for 'Belfast 400' will be civic governance. The programme outlined in appendix 1 specifically identifies opportunities to engage with school groups through 'living history' trips to the City Hall. This will comprise opportunities for pupils to reinact different scenarios and understand what happens in the Council chamber today. The key stage 4 citizenship curriculum would be targeted.</p>
2.4	<p>The programme also includes a 'Big Dinner' to mark the anniversary of the Charter on Saturday 27 April 2013. Current plans would be to target younger groups and be the opportunity to celebrate the city's success. This would require more engagement with Lord Mayor's office should they be willing to take the lead.</p>
2.5	<p>Officers have had informal discussions with a number of external organisations</p>

	which are planning to commemorate the charter anniversaries, including the BBC, Belfast Harbour Commissioners, PRONI and the Ulster Committee for Irish Historical Studies. There is an opportunity to develop a wider programme of activity/events based on both Council planned activity and stakeholder events.
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3	Resource Implications
3.1	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>Costings are provided in the attached Appendix 1. The possibility of external funding might also be explored, for example Heritage Lottery funding for the civic governance and citizenship element. MAGUS has already expressed an interest in supporting an event which would host the 40 towns in Ireland which received a charter. Council's financial contribution will be met by realigning existing budget.</p>

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are no Equality and Good Relations considerations attached to this report.

5	Recommendations
5.1	<p>Members are asked to recommend the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agree the outline programme attached as Appendix 1. - Explore additional budget required via MAGUS and HLF for support. - Organise a stakeholder briefing to identify external programming linked to the charter.

6	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 - Outline programme

**January 2013
Full Programme**

Appendix 1

PROGRAMME				
24 th January 2013	Belfast 400 Book Launch of 'Belfast 400' book. Formal start of the 400 Programme.	City Hall	TCA Unit	£800
January 2013	Talks Series of Seminars delivered in partnership with key institutions e.g. PRONI	City Hall and possibly across the City	TCA Unit	£4000
Mid Feb 2013	Belfast Places Launch community competition for best ideas on how to discover and communicate place-related history. Best 5 across city quarters are facilitated to deliver their ideas.	On Line / in press	TCA Unit	£10,000
TBC	40 Towns A programme for all 40 towns in Ireland which received charters – 3 people representing each, plus VIPs – list to be agreed. Format would include a number of talks, city tour and dinner	City Hall and across the City	TCA Unit / external support MAGUS	£10,000 Income £10,000 MAGUS
Easter Event 'Belfast 400' will take place from 30 March-2 April 2013, 11am-5pm each day and will be free to attend.	Easter Events programme As part of the 4 day Easter event, the doors of City Hall will open to the public. Within the building, there will be an assortment of activities, from exhibitions, tours, films, talks and lectures, drama, puppetry and workshops. There are also plans to make use of the lawns and the live screen over the Festival period to further encourage citizens and visitors to come into City Hall to be part of the celebrations. The City Events Unit will be working alongside our colleagues in Tourism, Culture and Arts, Facilities Management and Corporate Communications as well as external partners, Titanic Belfast and the Belfast Harbour Commissioners, with the key aim to develop coordinated activity to celebrate the anniversary of the charter and Belfast being granted town status.	City Hall	Events Unit	TBC – separate Events budget

From April 2013, all year	<p>Charter Exhibition</p> <p>This becomes permanent; centres on the charter itself, properly mounted and in appropriate conditions. Also 1888 charter; maces; loans of LeSquire seal (NMNI; Chichester portrait (BHC); Town Book (private ownership).</p>			£21,000*
May – June	<p>Civic Governance Programme</p> <p>A major citizenship project centred on the council chamber, with the Youth Forum playing a major role. Would use a living history approach – one facilitator playing roles, the other managing the learning. Currently looking at three scenarios – starting with Chichester and 1613. There would be an opportunity for Members to link with their local schools and perhaps say something about their work now. The key stage 4 citizenship curriculum would be specifically targeted, but connection would also be sought with older young people through informal education contexts. Costs are based on 8 weeks = 40 days. The number of young people with whom engagement might happen is c. 2500. The involvement of the Youth Forum brings the opportunity to apply for a Heritage Lottery Fund ‘Young Roots’ grant of c. £25,000. This programme may have the capacity to become a regular, annual event, linking to the citizenship curriculum particularly at key stages 3 and 4, connecting with young people and starting a process of engagement with council at a relatively early age.</p>	City Hall	TCA Unit and Record Manager	<p>Civic Governance and Citizenship £30,000</p> <p>Income HLF £25,000*</p>
27 th April	<p>The Big Dinner</p> <p>Charter date – The Big Dinner; entertainment for and showcasing of Belfast talent, as representing the future of the city 400 stakeholders invited from across the city</p>		Lord Mayor’s Office	£15,000