



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau
Date:	Tuesday 5 February 2013
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members are aware that Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau submit their Business Plan annually to Development Committee for approval. The plan covers the leisure marketing and business tourism activity undertaken by BVCB, visitor servicing carried out by BWC in the city centre and at the two airports. This occurs January / February to ensure that budgets and activity are in place by March to allow BVCB to plan activity from the 1 April 2013.
1.2	BVCB's plan for 2013/14 is attached as Appendix 1. Members should note that this is the final year of a three year strategic plan agreed by Development Committee in 2011. More detailed plans for the Belfast Welcome Centre and Airport TIC's are available from the Tourism, Culture and Arts Manager ext 3586.
1.3	The plan outlines key performance in the first three quarters of 2012/13 on pages 10 – 11. Some specific examples of success to date, include securing 56 cruise ships for 2013, exceeding income targets from private sector partners, securing conferences worth £19.1 million for the city and dealing with 451,555 enquiries via the 3 TICs. Areas under-performing include advertising equivalent from PR due to the lag time between press visits and coverage (therefore likely to reach targets by year end); and value of accommodation booking fees from conferences - delegates tend to negotiate better rates directly with hotels as there is no commission. Overall however, as reported to Committee on a quarterly basis, BVCB's performance has remained on target for 2012/13 period.
1.4	The plan proposes targets and KPI's for 2013/14 on pages 6 – 9. Key initiatives for 2013 include the relocation of the Belfast Welcome Centre and servicing the World Police and Fire Games. In summary, through implementing this Business Plan, BVCB will deliver 312,000 bednights and visitors for Belfast City generating £60 million spend in the local economy.

1.5	The overall budget is £3.8 million of which £1,827,465 is requested from Council. This represents a leverage of 1:1.09 and return on investment of 1:16. BCC's core contribution is £15,000 less than 2012/13 as one of the initiatives, About Belfast guide, was included in Council's efficiency programme in 2011; on the basis that this publication could attract commercial sponsorship / advertising and reduce public funding subvention.
1.6	The 2013/14 Business Plan has been developed with input from Council officers. It is aligned to the Belfast Integrated Strategic Tourism Framework 2010 – 2014, contributing to Council's overall targets to grow visitor numbers by 20% and spend by 40% by 2014.

2	Key Issues
2.1	Committee received a presentation from NITB and Tourism Ireland in December 2012. One of the key issues discussed included the decline in the GB market and the emerging research on market segments.
2.2	Members agreed to develop a Memorandum of Understanding between BCC/ BVCB, NITB and Tourism Ireland around marketing Belfast as a visitor destination. BCC is taking the lead on this. Following the BVCB meeting on Thursday 24 January 2013, BVCB Chairman and Chief Executive met with the Director of Development, the Head of Economic and International Development and the Tourism, Culture and Arts Manager to agree a process and timetable for the development of a MOU and an association Action Plan. The aim is to complete this exercise by end of May 2013.
2.3	As part of this process BVCB and BCC will analyse the new research on NI/GB/ROI segments undertaken by both NITB and Tourism Ireland. We will assess how well the city's product fits each segment, identify gaps and finalise key messages and an Action Plan for 2013 and beyond.
2.4	Members will be aware of BCC/BVCB's current Backin' Belfast campaign to help drive footfall back into the city. However there is also a need to look at the medium and long term actions to restore confidence in the market place and safeguard conference, cruise and tour operator bookings. BVCB has agreed to review activity on an ongoing basis throughout 2013 and respond as appropriate. Activity in the plan may change and BVCB require the flexibility to respond to the marketplace. KPI's will remain constant.
2.5	The relocation of the Belfast Welcome Centre is a priority in BVCB's plan and the Council's Investment Programme. £1.8 million has been secured from SP&R and EU ERD funding. Plans have now been developed and the procurement of contractors has commenced. Negotiations around current and new leases are ongoing.
2.6	Finally, BVCB will undergo a rebranding exercise in 2013 and after consultation and research with stakeholders and members, the Board of BVCB has agreed on the name Visit Belfast. This will also be used for the new BWC.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	BVCB is requesting £1,827,465 towards 13/14 plan. This has been included in departmental estimates.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	None.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Committee agree support towards BVCB in 2013/14 and will monitor progress against targets on a quarterly basis.
5.2	BCC will lead on developing an MOU with Tourism Ireland and NITB.
5.3	BVCB will respond to the segmentation analysis, MOU and impact of the flag protests as appropriate.

6	Decision Tracking
MOU to be drafted by end of May 2013	
Shirley McCay	

7	Key to Abbreviations
BVCB	Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau
NITB	Northern Ireland Tourist Board
TIL	Tourism Ireland Limited
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
TIC	Tourism Information Centre

8	Documents Attached
Appendix 1.	