



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Belfast Business Awards
<b>Date:</b>	23 April 2013
<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	As Members will be aware, at the 22 November 2011 meeting of the Development Committee approval was given for Council to deliver the 2012 Belfast Business Awards in partnership with Belfast City Centre Management (BCCM). The event took place on 8 November 2012.
1.2	The Belfast Business Awards is an annual awards scheme comprising of 11 award categories specifically aimed at recognising and rewarding business excellence in the city.
1.3	The Belfast Business Awards have been running since 2004 – initially as a project led by Belfast City Centre Management Company (BCCM) in conjunction with Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce (BCTC). Since 2010 Council has been the lead delivery agent for the awards, supported by BCCM as organising partner. BCCM is paid a fixed sum for its role in this work, in addition to the core funding that it receives from Council each year.
1.4	The awards offer an opportunity to acknowledge the importance that the Council attaches to supporting a dynamic, competitive private sector in the city. They are also a means of rewarding excellence among local companies.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	The 2012 Belfast Business Awards received over 120 entries from businesses throughout the council area, for the 11 award categories available, with some categories more heavily subscribed than others. The awards process concluded with a Gala Dinner and Awards Ceremony held in City Hall on 8 November 2012 attended by 330 individuals, all of whom paid for participation at the event.

2.2	To deliver the awards funding is provided by Council, principal and category sponsors and ticket sales from those attending the Gala Dinner and Awards Ceremony. The cost for Council of delivering the awards is £20,000 with an additional £9,000 budget for BCCM's management fee. As might be expected in the current climate, securing sponsorship for the awards has been challenging. In 2012 a principal sponsor for the awards could not be secured however sponsorship was obtained for each of the eleven award categories.
2.3	As the lead partner, the organisation of the event involves a significant volume of work for Council team. Although some tasks are delivered by BCCM as partner organiser, BCC has a significant role in the marketing and promotion of the awards, the creation and management of the online entry process and overseeing the event management process.
2.4	Staff resources to manage the awards are delivered by the Economic Development Unit. At present the unit is involved in a significant range of business support initiatives as well as the capital schemes and employability activity that form a core part of the Investment Programme. Consideration needs to be given to the resourcing impact of a significant event of this nature, given that there is at least a six month lead-in time and that the run-up to the event requires dedicated staff resources for at least a six week period.
2.5	While the Belfast Business Awards is one awards scheme operated in the city, a number of other award schemes are also delivered, albeit on a regional scale. These include; Belfast Telegraph Business Awards, Northern Ireland Social Enterprise Awards, UTV Business Eye Awards and Women in Business Awards, amongst others. Although the Belfast Business Awards are distinct in terms of their Belfast only focus they still compete for entries and publicity with the regional awards.
2.6	<p>In light of these points, it may be appropriate to consider the merits of Council engagement in a business awards scheme for the coming year. There are a number of potential options as a way forward:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="272 1335 1337 1603">1. Re-focus the awards on a key sector e.g. Digital Belfast Awards. This would reflect the growing importance of technology-focused growth in the city and would align to significant council investment through the super-connected Belfast programme as well as investments in an innovation centre and digital hub. Consideration could be given to working with relevant partner organisations such as Momentum, QUB/JU/BMC, Invest NI and Northern Ireland Science Park. A number of similar awards do exist such as NISP's £25k Awards and Digital Advertising Awards.</li> <li data-bbox="272 1637 1337 1771">2. Proceed on the same basis as in previous years i.e. work with Belfast City Centre Management in organising the awards and take the lead role on communication, registration and judging as well as overall project delivery responsibility, including financial management.</li> <li data-bbox="272 1805 1337 1984">3. Decide not to be a lead partner in the event this year but permit BCCM to go ahead with the Awards using the branding. Please note, if this option is approved, it is likely that BCCM would approach Council for the same level of financial report as in previous years as they do not take account of the event costs in their request for core funding to Council.</li> </ol>

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	The resource implementations will vary depending on which option is endorsed. Options 1 and 2 would be likely to involve a financial commitment of around £30,000 in addition to significant staff resources. Option 3 may still see an approach to the Council for financial support from the organising partner, but there would be limited implications for staff resources.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	There are no specific equality and good relations considerations attached to this report.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	Members are asked to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Note the contents of this report</li> <li>2. Agree the preferred option and approve the associated resource requirements, if appropriate.</li> </ol>

<b>6</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
BCCM - Belfast City Centre Management BCTC - Belfast Chamber of Trade and Commerce	