Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Belfast Tech Mission update
Date:	20 August 2013
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officers:	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives and International Development, ext 3459

1	**Relevant Background Information**
1.1	At the March 2013 meeting of the Development Committee, Members agreed to support a Council led trade mission for Belfast based digital and tech companies up to a maximum of £20,000, to the west coast of America.
1.2	The Belfast Tech Mission 2013 is aimed at providing an opportunity for up to 20 companies to travel to San Francisco and San Jose to showcase and network with leading companies, investors and venture capitalists from the West Coast of America. The Mission is aimed at Belfast based Digital Media, Software and Hi-Tech IT companies who offer a globally focused product or service and are considering expansion or increasing sales and investment opportunities in the west coast of America.
1.3	The Belfast Tech Mission is designed to showcase the new technologies and products currently being developed by Belfast based companies and to promote Belfast as one of the leading digitally connected cities in Europe and a prime location for international investment.
1.4	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the development of the project and to request the attendance of the key Council staff to participate on the mission.

2	**Key Issues**
2.1	The Belfast Tech Mission is led by Belfast City Council in partnership with Invest Northern Ireland and will take place from the 14 October–18 October 2013.
2.2	Due to the interest and scope of the project, additional funding has been secured from Invest Northern Ireland and the European Regional Development Fund

	(£40,000) to help support up to 20 Belfast based companies attend and to procure additional event management and business support on the ground in the United States.
2.3	The main aim of the mission is to: – Increase the number of Belfast technology companies selling and doing business in the US. – Increase the knowledge of Belfast Tech companies in what it takes to establish and secure VC funding in the US. – Improving the business networks and partnerships with companies in Belfast and the US. – Raise the profile of Belfast as an investment location and digitally connected city in the US.
2.4	Belfast City Council has been working in partnership with, Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce, Northern Ireland Science Park and Digital Circle in the recruitment and promotion of the Belfast Tech Mission, and over 45 applications have been received.
2.5	A selection panel made up of key staff from Invest NI, Northern Ireland Science Park and the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce has been established to help score and select the applicants, with the selection of the final 20 companies to be completed by the 12 August 2013.
2.6	Council officers are working closely with Invest Northern Ireland staff based in San Jose to develop and co-ordinate the itinerary which will consist of three key strands – business to business, civic and city and university programme.
2.7	The programme will consist of a series of parallel strands made up of 3 days of showcasing and one to one meetings for the participating businesses and those based on the West Coast, a civic and city programme between Belfast City Council and the City of San Francisco, Irish Technology Leadership Group (ITLG), City of Berkeley and the City of Portland and a University programme between Queen's, University of Ulster and the University of Berkeley. A draft itinerary is attached and additional details will be added once confirmed.
2.8	As requested by the Development Committee in March 2013, this report seeks approval for key Council staff to attend and participate on the mission.
2.9	Due to the nature and scope of the mission and the additional resources confirmed for the project, it is recommended that the following representatives are in attendance. Lord Mayor, Chair and Deputy Chair of Development Committee (or nominees) and two Council Officers.

3	**Resource Implications**
3.1	Budget of £20,000 approved at Development Committee in March 2013. Additional financial support from Invest Northern Ireland and the European Regional Development Fund of up to £40,000 has been confirmed to support additional event management and business support on the ground in the United States.

3.2	Council staff attendance will be covered from the above confirmed resources and as such no additional finance required.

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

5	**Recommendations**

5.1	It is recommended that Members:
	    − Note the contents of the report
	    − Approve the attendance of the Lord Mayor, Chair and Deputy Chair of Development Committee (or nominees) and two Council Officers.

6	**Documents Attached**
Appendix 1 – Draft Itinerary	

A. Itinerary

Sunday 13th October
- Delegation travel from Belfast / Dublin to San Francisco.
- Delegation to be based in San Francisco for duration.
- Lord Mayor / BCC to host welcome at hotel/venue tbc

Monday 14th October
San Francisco
- **Belfast Tech Showcase -** for Belfast companies taking part in the mission in conjunction with San Francisco based companies and investors.
- **Civic and City meetings**
- Consul's Reception for business and civic delegations

Tuesday 15th October
San José/Silicon Valley
- **Belfast Tech Showcase -** for Belfast companies taking part in the mission in conjunction with Silicon Valley based companies and investors.
- **Civic and City meetings**
- Reception by Silicon Valley network tbc

Wed 16th October
Berkeley

- **Belfast Tech business to business** meetings
- **University programme** and site visits with University of Berkeley
- **Civic and City reception** with Mayor Bates to include UC Berkeley.

Thursday 17th October
Portland, Oregon
- Civic delegation travel to Portland
- **Civic and City reception** with Mayor of Portland, Charlie Hales (meetings programme currently being finalised).

Friday 18th October
Return to Belfast