



Report to: Development Committee

Subject: International Marketing Framework for Belfast

Date: 20 August 2013

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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that one of the key commitments in the Council's Investment Programme 2012- 2015 is that the Council will work with city partners to promote Belfast proactively on the international stage to attract trade and investment, increase visitor and student numbers and build the networks necessary to support growth.
1.2	Within Belfast, the Council is one of many city stakeholders with established connections across the world for a range of purposes. All of the city's key stakeholders engage internationally to market their product and develop supportive relationships. There is considerable scope to co-ordinate the international promotional efforts within Belfast between stakeholders so that the city is presented positively, consistently and effectively. In order to win new investment, attract talent and visitors, push forward our indigenous businesses and connect our communities to the world, Belfast must present a united proposition that enables all stakeholders to fulfil their own goals - in short, city stakeholders must speak to the world as one city, with one voice.
1.3	Over the last year work has been undertaken to develop a draft International relations framework that seeks to shape how city stakeholders can work together in a stronger and purposeful way to maximize the economic impact for Belfast as a whole. Following extensive research and analysis, stakeholder engagement and feedback from Committee and political parties, this report sets out the process adopted, the proposed market segments and the key geographical locations considered appropriate for Belfast. Further consultation with stakeholders is required to refine the targets and joint projects within the detail of the Action Plan which will follow formal adoption of the Framework by Council.

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>During the last year significant consultation with over 20 key stakeholders has been undertaken to establish the international relationships that city stakeholders are already engaged in, to generate a common understanding of what Belfast has to offer and to identify opportunities to build on existing relationships. Based on this consultation, a draft international relations framework to position Belfast as a strong, attractive and competitive destination of choice for those who trade, invest, visit and study. This was initially considered by Committee in May 2013 and subsequently was discussed through party briefings. The appended Framework is now the proposed revised version following the political parties' feedback.</p>
2.2	<p>The feedback from Committee and party briefings highlighted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the need for a prioritised and focused approach; - the inclusion of UK and Ireland links; - a short-term action plan for the period 2013-2014; and - an assessment of the potential to reignite Friends of Belfast
2.3	<p>In summary, the proposed aims of the International Relations Framework are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To maximise economic return of development for Belfast. - To increase the economic benefits of marketing Belfast internationally. <p>The following objectives are proposed to help increase the economic benefits of developing a city-wide approach to proactively market Belfast internationally:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deliver increased economic return to Belfast through collaborative international promotion. - Develop meaningful international partnerships and civic relationships to support Belfast's growth. - Promote the attractiveness of the city for business, education and tourism. - Create the optimum mechanisms for international promotion of Belfast. <p>The framework sets out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - targets for each of the three primary market segments – trade and investment, tourism, education & learning; and - key actions for each of the geographical target areas - China, Europe, India, North America.
2.4	<p>An outline action plan is appended for the period 2013 – 2015, which builds on the baseline work already undertaken. It furthermore identifies the suggested role of Council as a co-ordinating partner and presents proposed priority actions for Council at this stage. Joint Projects emanating from other stakeholders have yet to be added to this plan which will occur during the next phase of consultation.</p>
2.5	<p>Proposed outcomes and annual targets for BCC are outlined in the Framework, focusing on Business & Leisure Tourism, Education, Learning & Talent and Trade & investment. This includes longer term outcomes and annual targets</p>

2.6	<p>which will be achieved most effectively by Council working with key stakeholders in the delivery of the Framework. As the regional driver, Belfast has a key role to play in helping to deliver a number of regional targets; however, it is important to recognise the targets and longer term outcomes need to be agreed with city stakeholders as they can only be achieved in partnership.</p> <p>To help deliver on the targets for this year with respect to the current International Relations Framework, the following results have been achieved to date:</p> <p><u>General: Development of the Framework and relationships</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Held stakeholder workshop with Lord Mayor - Carried out stakeholder analysis - Produced first International Belfast newsletter - Joined NI Connections Diaspora - Produced a shared International calendar with stakeholders - Connection made to promote Belfast through HMS Duncan - Developed Belfast civic welcome programme format <p><u>China</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitated and supported Chinese New Year including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lantern display at City Hall - Economic Conference - Fashion Show - Chinese Cultural day at Ulster Hall - Produced China briefing - Held stakeholder workshop - Reviewed Sister City relationship with Hefei <p><u>India</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Secured and hosted Global India Business Meeting - Developed GIBM programme and secured 300 delegates, 20 investment leads and 50 local companies connected to Indian opportunities - Delivered 40 plus India in Belfast week events - Delivered GIBM and India Week communications plan - Undertook study visit to India - Produced India country briefing - Held 2 India stakeholder workshops - Hosted Mumbai VIP on renewable energies <p><u>USA</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undertook mission to Nashville, South by South West and Austin - Reviewed Friends of Belfast network - Produced country briefing - Exploring September cultural/tourism visit to NYC - Planning October trade mission to California - Consulted with stakeholders <p><u>Europe</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing lobby to maximise EU funds for Belfast 2014-2020 - Leading on NI European Regional Forum in Europe - Re-established cooperation links with Dublin, Liverpool, Glasgow and Edinburgh
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<p>2.7</p> <p>2.8</p> <p>2.9</p> <p>2.10</p>	<p><u>Sister Cities</u> Reviewing and fully utilising the civic and sister city relationships that already exist has formed part of the development of the Framework. Members will be aware that BCC has a sister city relationship with Nashville, USA and Hefei in China. Sister cities relationships provide a formal civic link between Belfast and that city. In order to make it meaningful there needs to be actions attached to each relationship to deliver results for Belfast. At this point, it is considered valuable to continue developing the sister city link with Nashville given its importance in the creative industries and especially the music sector.</p> <p>Hefei in China has always been a more difficult sister city link to develop and achieve tangible results. Strenuous efforts have been made to deliver trade and investment from this relationship and specific programmes of work have been put in place, however, securing a meaningful result in the short term remains a challenge. The Local Chinese Chamber of Commerce are still committed to Hefei and one of their members has recently been appointed by Hefei City Government as a special envoy to promote the relationship. This means that it may be difficult to withdraw fully from the relationship without causing offence. Our latest analysis would indicate that it would be more fruitful to develop a new relationship with Shenyang in China, which is the region visited last year by OFM/DFM, QUB, UU, Belfast Met, Invest NI and Bombardier. Exploratory work is underway to assess the full value of a formal link with Shenyang.</p> <p>N. Irish Connections (NIC) Belfast Connections: Council is now a member of the newly established N. Irish Connections body, which is a company set up under the auspices of Invest NI to link to Diaspora throughout the world. The work programme encompasses the creation of an active database of persons from NI, and persons with an interest in NI; the hosting of in market events to bring the Diaspora together to ask for their help in attracting investment and opportunities for NI and the establishment of the diaspora network as an international marketing tool.</p> <p>As a member of this network, Belfast has access to the named contacts and can be part of events and communications for specific promotional purposes. Members asked that consideration be given to the reignition of the Friends of Belfast network, which existed from the late 90s as a social capital network of business people, academics, political and community representatives with an interest in supporting the regeneration of Belfast. Whilst some of the original Friends of Belfast network members are still in contact with Council there is a need to refresh and relaunch a meaningful network aligned with our current objectives and priorities in the Investment Programme. It is considered that this can best be achieved by developing a ‘ Belfast Connections’ subset within the NIC network. This will avoid duplication and confusion and ensure that Belfast has a specific identity of its own which links to NIC contacts with a particular interest in Belfast. Such a Belfast Connections network can be sustained with minimal cost if we are part of the wider NIC network albeit separate resources would be required for specific Belfast Connections events and marketing activity.</p>
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<p>2.11</p> <p>2.12</p> <p>2.13</p> <p>2.14</p> <p>2.15</p>	<p><u>City Marketing</u></p> <p>It is clear from the research, which has been undertaken, that each of the organisations involved in the marketing of the city tend to do this independently of each other. The marketing of the city has developed organically rather than through an integrated marketing strategy. Each organisation focuses on their own perception and experience of Belfast using their own narratives, communication channels, target audience and brands.</p> <p>The development of the International Relations Framework demonstrates there is a high level of commonality in terms of the geographical locations where stakeholders are actively promoting the city and it is evident that there is the potential for more effective promotion and greater benefit if the city had a collective narrative and a brand which is understood and owned by all the city's stakeholders.</p> <p>There is strong evidence that cities with a clear narrative, strong brand and a coherent city marketing strategy are successful in attracting investment, visitors and global talent. Such cities include New York, Berlin, Barcelona and closer to home, Manchester, Edinburgh and Dublin.</p> <p>There is an urgent need for the city to develop an Integrated City Marketing strategy, which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of a city narrative, which is agreed by all stakeholders. • A refreshment of the City Brand ensuring it reflects the city's ambitions, its values and narrative, which is collectively owned by the city's stakeholders. • Agreed target audiences, product development priorities, marketing materials and communication channels, including a strong digital, on-line presence. • Agree the optimum structures for co-ordinated marketing of the city. <p>The necessary resources or expertise to develop a city marketing strategy is not available in-house. It is, therefore, proposed that the Council engage the services of a City Marketing specialist to support the development of such a strategy. It is recommended that a stakeholder steering group is set up to oversee the development and implementation of the strategy under the chairmanship of the Council's Chief Executive.</p>
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<p>3</p> <p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p>	<p>Resource Implications</p> <p>Members have agreed a budget of £80,000, in the current financial year, for international relations, as well as a £150,000 budget specifically for the Global India Business Meeting.</p> <p>Currently international relations work is being undertaken by staff within the European Unit. .</p>
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3.3	The cost of developing a International Marketing strategy should not exceed £50K and will be met from the existing City Development budget.
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4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
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4.1	There are unlikely to be any Equality and Good Relations issues attached to this report, although the International Relations Framework is currently undergoing equality screening.
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5	Recommendations
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5.1	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) approve the International Relations Framework for Belfast and the associated action plan; ii) agree to continued engagement with key city stakeholders and the approach to Belfast’s sister city relationships with Nashville and Heifei; iii) Agree to the employment of a City Marketing specialist to support the development of a City Marketing strategy to include the elements set out in Paragraph 2.14 of this report; iv) Agree to the setting up of a stakeholder steering group chaired by the Council’s Chief Executive.
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6	Decision Tracking
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Regular update reports will be brought to the Development Committee by the Director of Development.	
Reporting Officer: John McGrillen	

7	Appendices
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Appendix 1 – International Framework Contacts	
Appendix 2 – Action Plan	