



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	International Trade links between Belfast, USA & Canada
<b>Date:</b>	22 October 2013
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Laura Leonard, EU Manager, ext 3577

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	<p>As part of the Council's Investment Programme, we are committed to promoting job creation through inward investment and export promotion. To this end, Council has recently approved the Belfast International Marketing and Relations Framework which commits the city to supporting activity to deliver economic impact under the 3 markets segments of trade and investment, business and leisure tourism, and education and talent. Over 20 stakeholders across Belfast have agreed to collaborate on target markets where appropriate and to coordinate activity for the wider benefit of the city overall. An annual calendar of proposed inward and outward visits has been compiled and will be updated regularly so that Council can track and support visiting delegations and deliver cross sectoral outward missions as appropriate as part of the city wide approach.</p>
1.2	<p>As part of the International Framework, North America has been identified as a destination market which can deliver extensive economic benefits for Belfast across each market segment. Previously Council and the City enjoyed a range of constructive civic and business relationships with political, educational, business and commercial institutions in USA. Formal Memoranda existed from the late 1990s to mid 2000s with New York, Boston, Portland in Maine and Halifax, Nova Scotia. Other less formalized but still structured relationships existed with keynote business leaders, politicians and educational representatives in other cities mainly on the East Coast and predominantly under the Friends of Belfast network.</p>
1.3	<p>With the new International Framework, Council has committed to re-establishing productive links with North America, and most recently, Council commenced the building of links again with New York as part of the outward visit in early September 2013. In addition to participation at the launch of the N. Irish Connections network in New York, Council undertook a series of business meetings with the American Ireland Fund, Tourism Ireland, Invest NI, Manhattan Chamber of Commerce and the US State Dept of Commerce. The potential of an inward mission from the American Ireland Fund was considered as part of these meetings and recently it has been confirmed that a delegation will visit Belfast on Feb. 27/28<sup>th</sup> 2014. This inward mission will comprise the first time that the American</p>

	Ireland Fund has agreed to hold their annual conference outside USA offering significant opportunities for Belfast to capitalize on the presence of important business leaders and investors. Preparation for this inward mission has commenced and an opportunity has arisen for Council to engage directly with the American Ireland Fund in early November.
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<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	As part of a programme of work of Visit Belfast and Waterfront Hall, the Lord Mayor will be in Washington in November 6/7 <sup>th</sup> supporting a sales mission highlighting the new proposed convention centre facilities. Other meetings are being arranged to dovetail with this visit to further the actions identified under the International Framework such as supporting potential inward missions.
2.2	Under the auspices of American Ireland Fund, KPMG have invited the Lord Mayor to a meeting with 24 senior business figures interested in the Belfast proposition on 8 <sup>th</sup> November. Detailed discussion will also include preparation specifically for the Feb inward mission.
2.3	Furthermore Lord Mayor has been invited by the Mayor of New Brunswick to discuss potential trade relations and to visit J&J Pharma, a company being courted by Invest NI. An invite has also been extended to the Lord Mayor to attend a meeting in Toronto on 9 <sup>th</sup> November, with the American Ireland Fund to continue the preparations for the Feb inward mission. The Lord Mayor will also be a guest of Tourism Ireland Limited at the launch of their Marketing Plan in Toronto at this time.
2.4	Given that discussions will take place with the American Ireland Fund and other potential partners on future international links with Belfast, it is considered appropriate for an officer from Development Department to accompany the Lord Mayor on this programme. The anticipated cost of attendance of an officer will not exceed £2500, however there are no associated costs for the Lord Mayor relating to the trip.

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
	It is anticipated that the cost of an officer accompanying the Lord Mayor on the USA and Canada programme will not exceed £2500. There are no associated costs to Council for the Lord Mayor.

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	There are no equality or good relations implications.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	It is recommended that Members agree to the attendance of one officer to accompany the Lord Mayor on a series of engagements to explore international trade links between Belfast, USA and Canada.

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
<p>Timeline: An update will be brought to Committee in due course.  Reporting Officer: John McGrillen</p>	