



**Report to:** Development Committee

**Subject:** Update on International Framework, China Action Plan

**Date:** 13 November 2013

**Reporting Officer:** John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470

**Contact Officers:** Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives, ext 3577

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	Members will recall that in August this year a paper was received on International Relations recommending a number of actions to strengthen and support our work in China for the benefit of our city. Actions proposed were agreed by Committee and this paper provides an update on two of those actions which relate to our Sister City Relationship with Hefei and proposal to strengthen our links with the city of Shenyang.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<b>Hefei</b>  Members will be aware that Belfast signed a Sister City agreement with Hefei in 2005 but that our relationship with Hefei has not yielded anticipated results. It was agreed the relationship should be reviewed and that Belfast City Council representatives should attend the Sister City Conference in Hefei from October 27 <sup>th</sup> to November 2 <sup>nd</sup> .  Cllr Mac Giolla Mhin attended the conference with Deirdre Ferguson from the European Unit. The visit was very successful in terms of promoting our city, cementing the Sister City relationship and identifying areas of mutual interest for our cities (see full feedback report, appendix 1).  In preparation for the visit to Hefei our Belfast China Stakeholder members were asked to give consideration to opportunities for collaboration with the city. A range of organisations including our two universities, Confucius Institute and hub schools, the British Council and PSNI responded. Their suggestions were presented during our meetings in Hefei and opportunities highlighted included collaboration in relation to:

- EU funded projects which China is eligible to participate in
- Renewables
- Creative industry
- Tourism
- Connected Health
- Art and cultural exchanges
- Exchange of people with a focus on home stays
- Visits from high rank officials
- School/teacher exchanges

These were welcomed by Hefei officials and direct contact will be made by the Chief of the Foreign Affairs division with our local organisations to follow up on potential opportunities.

In the August Committee report members were also notified of the proposed art exhibition to take place in Hefei 2014. This work is led by an organisation called Irish Wave and a further report was received by Committee in October to support an inward visit from Hefei to work with artists to plan this exhibition which will now take place in Hefei, Belfast, Dublin and Cork next year.

Following our recent visit to Hefei, officials welcome the opportunity to expand the focus of their inward visit to include meetings with stakeholders to discuss wider areas of collaboration as highlighted above. We are now making preparations with the city of Hefei for an inward visit to Belfast in December 2013 or January 2014.

Other learning from our visit to Hefei included information provided by other Sister Cities and this is detailed more fully in appendix 1.

### **Shenyang**

Members will also be aware that in the August Committee report the city of Shenyang was identified as a Chinese city that Belfast should seek to strengthen and formalise its relationship with. The rationale behind this recommendation was based on the fact that key city stakeholder organisations, Queens University, University of Ulster, Bombardier and the Confucius Institute have well established relationships with this city within the educational and business spheres and also at senior political levels. All stakeholder organisations welcome the opportunity to strengthen links and to build on these to open doors and facilitate future benefits in the areas highlighted in our International Relations Framework.

The initial proposal of strengthening or having a close relationship between Belfast and Shenyang was raised when the Deputy Mayor of Shenyang visited Belfast in May 2012 with Shenyang Aircraft executives. That visit included a meeting with the First Minister at Stormont. Then in November 2012 Minister Foster visited Shenyang together with Michael Ryan and others as part of a wider NI Trade Mission to China led by the First and Deputy First Ministers.

Further encouragement to make an approach to Shenyang came from a meeting with the China Britain Business Council (CBBC) when it became known that Shenyang had issued a call to develop 'friendly cooperative relationships' with other cities. We responded to the call and CBBC arranged a meeting for Cllr

	<p>Reynolds (with Committee agreement) to meet with the Foreign Affairs office when he was in Shenyang during the summer. At that meeting Cllr Reynolds reiterated our desire to formalise our relationship with the city and we followed up with written communications reaffirming our interest.</p> <p>A response has now been received from the Shenyang Aircraft Company, (Bombardier's partner in Shenyang) which has been the conduit for correspondence from the Shenyang Mayor's office. Chen Haibo, the Mayor of Shenyang has confirmed he would like to meet with our Lord Mayor on the afternoon of November 22<sup>nd</sup> and welcomes the potential opportunity to discuss a more formal arrangement between our cities.</p> <p>Bombardier are co-ordinating the visit of Mayor Chen Haibo who will be accompanied by 21 delegates and 4 Shenyang Aircraft staff. The Lord Mayor has been invited to take part in proceedings which include a roundtable meeting with discussion on cooperation, a tour of the Wing facility, a potential ceremony to sign a letter of intent to strengthen our city to city relationships and exchange of gifts. Minister Foster, representatives from QUB, University of Ulster and Glen Dimplex will also attend.</p> <p>Following the visit to Belfast the delegation from Shenyang will travel on to Dublin.</p>
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<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	<p>Staff from the European Unit who lead on international affairs relating to China and will head up this work.</p> <p>No funding is needed in relation to the visit of the Mayor of Shenyang.</p> <p>£1,000 is requested from the International Relations budget to expand on initial plans to host the inward delegation from Hefei.</p>

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	There are no Equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	<p>It is recommended that:</p> <p><b>Hefei</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• £1,000 is approved to expand on initial plans for the inward visit from Hefei to include meetings with city stakeholders to follow up on discussions held in Hefei.</li> <li>• Follow up actions will be undertaken with Council staff and city stakeholders to promote links with Hefei for the benefit of the city in areas which support our international relations strategy, education, leisure tourism and business.</li> </ul> <p><b>Shenyang</b></p> <p>Members are asked to note:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the visit from the Mayor of Shenyang on November 22<sup>nd</sup>,</li><li>• the request for the Lord Mayor to attend, and</li><li>• potential to sign a letter of intent to strengthen our city to city relationship.</li></ul>
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<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
Timeline:	Reporting Officer: Shirley McCay