



Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Women in Business International Business Women's Conference 2014
Date:	19 November 2013
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officer	Shirley McCay, Head of Economic Initiatives and International Development, ext 3459

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	In May 2014, Women in Business NI will host an International Business Women's Conference aimed at showcasing Northern Ireland's business potential and celebrating and promoting the role of women business owners and managers on a local and global scale.
1.2	The core theme of the Conference is "Creating a New Economy" and the conference will provide a platform for conference partners to champion the issues affecting business women.
1.3	Women in Business have approached Belfast City Council with a proposal to sponsor the 2014 Conference. Members will be aware that the council has sponsored a number of annual Women in Business Awards. At the 20 August 2013 meeting of the Development Committee approval was given for Belfast City Council to sponsor the award for Best Small Business at the Women in Business Awards 2013.
1.4	While the audience for the Women in Business Awards is predominantly locally-based, the international conference will draw 750 participants from all across the world including USA, Canada and Europe.

2	Key Issues
2.1	Belfast City Council has been presented with the opportunity to sponsor the International Business Women's Conference which will take place between the 12 th & 15 th May 2014 to be held in a number of venues across the city. The main conference venue will be the Waterfront Hall and additional events will take place in Titanic Belfast and Belfast City Hall.
2.2	Women in Business have asked the council to be a key funder alongside the Office of the First and Deputy First Ministers (OFMdfM) (currently considering a business case for £50,000), Invest NI (£25,000 funding confirmed) and Visit Belfast (£25,000 committed from the Conference Subvention Fund).
2.3	The key aims of the conference are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To equip and inspire delegates to contribute to their economy and increase business growth potential • To explore and share how inclusive business is the future • To promote Belfast and Northern Ireland as an entrepreneurial location for business opportunity and investment • To provide opportunities for partnerships, routes to market, mentorships and export potential for female-led SMEs on a global scale.
2.4	In return for sponsorship, the organisers have identified a number of opportunities for interaction with the other funders, speakers and delegates. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement in panel discussions and workshop sessions on a range of key topic areas • Social programme: a welcome reception is being organised in Belfast City Hall • Attendance at the gala dinner in Titanic Belfast with an opportunity to showcase products and services of local companies.
2.5	The Conference organisers have already secured a number of local and international high profile speakers and have made an approach to Senator Hillary Clinton to perform the keynote speaker role at the conference. A decision is expected on this by the end of the year.

3.	Resource implications
3.1	The key conference partner package costs £15,000.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	The event will have a positive impact on Equality and Good Relations as it is designed to showcase, promote and celebrate the potential of local female business owners and managers to an international audience.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Note the request to sponsor the International Business Women's Conference in Belfast in May 2014 - Approve council sponsorship as a key conference partner at a level of £15,000.

