



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	International links – NYC and Boston, Massachusetts
Date:	18 February 2014
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Laura Leonard, EU Manager, ext 3577

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	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.
1.2	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 the 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.
1.3	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 an outward visit in early September 2013, for the launch of the Northern Irish Connections network in New York. During this visit, 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. A further series of meetings with key partner organizations took place during the 4 city visit made by the Lord Mayor to North America and Canada in early November 2013. Outcomes of both programmes included the recent New Brunswick cultural and trade inward mission to Belfast as well as the Opportunity Belfast Business Mission due to

	visit the City from 27 February to 1 March 2014. This latter mission is the first ever American Ireland Fund endorsed visit to Ireland and will involve over 25 senior business leaders from North America seeking to look at investment and partnering opportunities in Belfast. It will be followed by the first ever American Ireland Fund conference to be held outside the USA when it takes place in Belfast in June later this year.
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2	Key Issues
2.1	As part of a programme of developing relations in North America the Lord Mayor has accepted invitations with regards to a programme of meetings in New York and Boston/Massachusetts, from 19 to 25 March 2014. The programme will involve a series of meetings to actively further the actions identified under the Council's International Framework such as supporting potential inward missions.
2.2	The programme will include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Meeting with the New York State Comptroller, Mr Thomas P Di Napoli, to explore opportunities to invest in pension funds in Belfast projects. – Participation in a Boston business leaders breakfast meeting being hosted by Invest NI, the NI Bureau and Tourism Ireland. – Participation in a business luncheon being hosted by the American Ireland Partnership Board to brief it's donors on recent advances in Belfast, including the Innovation and Convention Centre developments. – Meeting with the Global Partnership's unit of the State Department to build on this group's recent visit to Belfast. – Meeting with new Mayor of Boston, Mayor Martin J Walsh. He has recently been elected as replacement for Mayor Thomas Menino, Mayor of Boston for two decades and a great friend and supporter of Belfast. – The meeting is aimed at fostering sustainable relations between Belfast and Boston and to invite Mayor Walsh to visit Belfast and address full Council as predecessor Mayor Menino did. – Meeting with Congressman Neal and Mayor Morse of Holyoke, Massachusetts to explore potential trade collaborations with Belfast and Western Massachusetts. – The visit will also include a keynote role at the Holyoke St Patrick's day parade.
2.3	Given that discussions will take place with the above political offices 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 Lord Mayor has therefore requested the assistance of an Officer to carry out a series of meetings with officials during this March visit, in order to secure firm commitment to plan future inward missions to Belfast and to help devise such programmes.
2.4	The anticipated cost of attendance of an officer will not exceed £2500, and there are no associated costs for the Lord Mayor relating to the trip.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	It is anticipated that the cost of an Officer accompanying the Lord Mayor on US mission will not exceed £2500. There are no associated costs to Council for the Lord Mayor.

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

5	Recommendations
5.1	It is recommended that Members agree to the attendance of one Officer in the exploratory business and civic mission to New York, Boston and Holyoke from 19 to 25 March 2014, to accompany the Lord Mayor at a maximum cost of £2500.

6	Decision Tracking
Timeline: March 2014	Reporting Officer: John Mc Grillen