



**Report to:** Development Committee

**Subject:** Festivals Forum Action Plan

**Date:** 18 March 2014

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

**Contact Officer:** Brian Johnston, Tourism, Culture, Heritage & Arts Manager, ext 3586

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Council agreed to establish a Festivals Forum in August 2004. The Forum was set up in recognition of the contribution festivals can make to the city by promoting economic regeneration, driving tourism and enhancing community relations.
1.2	The Tourism, Culture and Arts Unit invests approximately £400,000 of grant funding into festivals each year. This has been further bolstered by £300,000 under the City of Festivals Phase 2 programme (supported under the Belfast PEACE III Plan by the European Union's European Regional Development Fund through the PEACE III Programme), which has awarded money to festivals including the Belfast Children's Festival, Féile, Festival of Fools and Orangefest to develop audiences among hard-to-reach groups and communities.
1.3	Investing in a City of Festivals is identified as a priority under the Investment Programme 2012–15 and the Cultural Framework for Belfast 2012–15. These policies recognise the strength of the city's varied and extensive festivals calendar, acknowledge the role festivals play in inspiring communities and commit to continuing to promote city of festivals as a key message for the city.
1.4	The Festivals Forum provides a mechanism for the Council to engage with festivals to support and enhance the city's festival offering. The Forum currently has over 100 members from a wide range of community, arts and heritage organisations, and all festivals applying for grant aid from Council are invited to become members. In 2012/13 the Development Committee agreed to invest £30,000 in the Forum's Action Plan. In 2013/14 they agreed to invest £22,900 which was then augmented by Peace III City of Festivals funds.
1.5	Achievements to date include marketing initiatives promoting Belfast as a city of festivals such as billboard and flagfield campaigns; bespoke training courses and

	events; a city venue audit; and a study on socio economic impact of festivals. The Forum has hosted a number of practical presentations from Arts & Business; QUB; Titanic Foundation; PICAS (Programme for InterCultural Arts Support); and various BCC departments.
1.6	The Forum steering group also recently agreed new Terms of Reference which aim to streamline and formalise the group to encourage participation and input. These new Terms of Reference will be rolled out from April 2014.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	The draft Festivals Forum Action Plan 2014/15 is attached at appendix 1. It was devised in consultation with the Forum's steering group and wider membership.
2.2	The key objectives of the Action Plan include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Lobbying and influencing; including increasing the awareness of the contribution festivals make to the city</li> <li>– Marketing; including ongoing support of successful marketing initiatives, web presence and capitalising on group buying power</li> <li>– Member support and development; including monthly meetings, training and networking</li> <li>– Governance; to ensure the Forum is fit for purpose</li> </ul>
2.3	The total budget for the Action Plan is £22,900 which is included in the Departmental budget for 2014/15..
2.4	It is recommended that Members note the contents of this report and agree the contents of the draft Festivals Forum Action Plan 2014/15.

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	<u>Financial</u> £22,900 towards the implementation of the Festivals Forum Action Plan has been included in the Departmental budget for 2014/15.

<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	It is recommended that Members note the contents of this report and agree the Festivals Forum Action Plan 2014/15 and associated budget.

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
There is no Decision Tracking attached to this report.	

<b>7</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
Appendix 1 - Festivals Forum Action Plan 2014/15	