



Belfast City Council

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

1	Relevant Background Information
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 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 formalised 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 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 organisations 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 held in the City from 27 February to 1 March 2014.</p>

2	Key Issues
2.1	As part of a programme of developing relations in North America the Lord Mayor has proposed to undertake a business mission to NYC in partnership with the NI Chamber of Commerce to coincide with the New York New Belfast annual May conference. The Lord Mayor proposes using recent and existing connections with the NYC business community to facilitate face to face business meetings for up to 10 companies from Belfast. It is anticipated that the companies would travel at their own expense but that BCC would send an Economic Development officer to accompany and support the companies and report back on any results.
2.2	It is anticipated that the 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 in May 2014, to accompany the Lord Mayor and 10 Belfast businesses, at a maximum cost of £2500.

6	Decision Tracking
Timeline:	March 2014
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