



Report to: Development Committee

Subject: Update on the Lord Mayor's Forum, Maximising the Economic Corridor

Date: 17 June 2014

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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Belfast City Council through the Development Committee, agreed in January 2014 agreed to support an event on 28 March on realising the potential of the Belfast Dublin Economic Corridor Initiative.
1.2	Dublin City Council agreed to lead and drive this initiative in conjunction with Belfast City Council.
1.3	Further to several research reports produced over the last 2 decades, there is now a new opportunity to build on the strength of the geographical area between both cities, utilising the concentration of demographic, economic, educational, infrastructural, social and cultural resources that exists along the eastern seaboard.

2	Key Issues
2.1	The Lord Mayor of Belfast and the Lord Mayor of Dublin led on championing this initiative designed to boost efforts to attract and expand trade and investment opportunities across all sectors. The initiative forms part of both cities internationalisation strategies promoting the Corridor as a place to locate, start or grow a business with strong characteristics of a skilled, well educated talent pool and well established networks of support for company development.
2.2	In order to activate the commitment of both councils, the one day Leadership Forum was organised by Dublin and Belfast City Councils. The Forum started in Dublin and moved to Belfast later in the day, symbolically travelling along the Corridor on the Enterprise train. The overall focus of the event was on how business, tourism and government can collaborate along the Corridor to strengthen links and operate as a powerhouse to maximise potential and attract further investment. It is proposed that the conclusions of the Forum will lead to the manifestation of an action plan to animate the Belfast Dublin Economic

	Corridor, supported by a public commitment from both Councils in the form of a possible Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
2.3	<p><u>Objectives</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To revive and re-ignite the attention for and interest in the Corridor as a hub for trade and investment. – To highlight the economic potential of this geographical area and secure commitment to driving it forward. – To strengthen links between key players in business, education and government along the Corridor. – To investigate potential collaborative actions between stakeholders within the Corridor area.
2.4	<p><u>Outcomes of Leadership Forum</u></p> <p>KPMG attended the Leadership Forum in order to capture key points made during the event by the participants. The event took the form of a discussion forum, with keynote speakers outlining their thoughts of how the Corridor could be developed and encouraging attendees from public, private and voluntary sectors to highlight opportunities and challenges from their own perspectives.</p>
2.5	The themes explored during the Forum by the keynote speakers and attendees included smart technology, sustainability, tourism, infrastructure and the creative industries. The actions proposed are outlined in the KPMG document attached as an appendix to this report. (Appendix 1).
2.6	<p>The report documents six potential areas of activity that emerged during the course of the event;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Breaking down barriers to travel – Cross border education – A new ‘Enterprise’ train – ‘Trade not aid’ – The Belfast/Dublin Electric Car route – Collaboration between tourist boards
2.7	<p>and to explore the following with respect to each action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What has prevented it happening to date – What impact the action could have on the economic corridor if it were to be implemented – Who are the lead players who could make it happen, and – What are next steps and resource implications of each action.
2.8	<p><u>Next steps</u></p> <p>It is proposed that Belfast and Dublin City Council Officers meet to agree a way forward and develop a joint action plan on the 6 key themes; including engaging stakeholders across the sectors to lead on actions where appropriate.</p>

3	Resource Implications
3.1	There are no financial implications at this stage. Staff resources to develop the action plan will in the first instance, come from the Council’s European Unit. A fully budgeted action plan will be presented for agreement by Members in due course.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are no Equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this report.

5	Recommendations
5.1	<p>It is recommended that Committee;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - note the update and the KPMG report - agree to committing to a Memorandum of Understanding with Dublin City Council. - agree to the development of a budgeted action plan to be returned to committee for approval in due course.

6	Decision Tracking
Timeline: June 2014	Reporting Officer: John MGrillen