



<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	Belfast-Boston Sister Cities Relationship
<b>Date:</b>	17 June 2014
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
<b>Contact Officers:</b>	Laura Leonard, European Manager, ext 3577

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	Members will be aware that the Lord Mayor and the European Manager travelled to New York and Boston to foster strong trade, education and tourism links in the North American market in March 2014.
1.2	During this visit it became evident that there was a real interest at the highest political level to promote trade and investment and develop closer ties with Belfast.
1.3	At the April 2014 Development Committee meeting, Members agreed that the City of Belfast should enter into a Sister Cities Agreement to foster real actions and opportunities between both cities in the areas of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Economic development, trade and investment</li><li>– Tourism</li><li>– Cultural exchange</li><li>– Faith based exchange and educational linkages.</li></ul>
1.4	The Sister Cities Agreement was subsequently signed in Boston by the Lord Mayor of Belfast and the Mayor of Boston, Martin Walsh on 12 May 2014.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	The former Lord Mayor has suggested that in order to progress the Sister Cities relationship, that a Belfast Boston voluntary board is established in each city with a cross sectoral membership including political representatives.
2.2	The aim of the board would be to oversee the development and delivery of an action plan, and to work in partnership with the Sister Cities International organisation to deliver on the commitments of a meaningful Sister Cities

	<p>relationship. Members are asked to consider the establishment of a board and the necessary resources to support the board, alongside the development and delivery of an action plan.</p>
2.3	<p>The Development Committee at it's meeting in April this year, also agreed to host the Massachusetts State Senate President, Therese Murray during her visit to Northern Ireland in September 2014. President Murray is fully supportive of a Belfast/Boston Sister Cities relationship and fully endorsed the recent signing of the agreement. President Murray and the Health Minister Edwin Poots have already put in place a Memorandum of Understanding between Boston and Northern Ireland on connected health issues. She will be in Belfast in September 2014 as part of a political programme and business mission to Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It is anticipated that she will be accompanied by Congressman Richard Neal, and potentially the Mayor of Boston, Martin Walsh.</p>
2.4	<p>This visit presents an opportunity to explore in more detail potential actions around the agreed thematic areas of the Sister Cities Agreement, namely;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Economic development, trade and investment</li> <li>- Tourism</li> <li>- Cultural exchange</li> <li>- Faith based exchange and educational linkages.</li> </ul>
2.5	<p>Given the fact that an MOU already exists, on connected health issues, this presents be an opportunity for Belfast health bodies, research institutions and businesses, to look to Boston/Massachusetts for strategic partnerships, or investment.</p>
2.6	<p>The 5<sup>th</sup> EU/US E Health Marketplace and Conference, which takes place in Boston on 21-22 October 2014, will bring together Global connected health innovators, public officials and business leaders as part of the Connected Health Week in Boston. Members may wish to consider the potential benefits of participating in this event.</p> <p>The programme will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Business-to-business meetings;</li> <li>- Collaboration sessions focused on research, economic growth and innovative start-up companies;</li> <li>- Regional tour opportunities of Massachusetts incubator sites and innovation centres; &amp;</li> <li>- Exhibitions featuring connected health products, services and demonstrations.</li> </ul>
2.7	<p>The conference and connected meetings will facilitate the further development of the E health and ICT sector for Belfast as well as establishing strong US relations through the International Framework.</p>

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	<p>It is anticipated that the cost of participating in the EU/US E Health Marketplace and Conference with attendance by the Lord Mayor, Chair and Deputy Chairs of the Development Committee or their nominees, plus an Officer will not exceed £10,000. The budget for hosting Senator Murray has already been approved at a</p>

	maximum of £5,000 by Members of the Development Committee. The cost of the development and delivery of a Belfast Boston Sister Cities action plan along with staff resources is still to be determined and will be brought to Committee in due course.
--	--

<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	<p>It is recommended that Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Consider the development of a budgeted Belfast Boston Sister Cities action plan to be developed in agreement with both cities and to the satisfaction of the BCC Development committee.</li> <li>– Consider the establishment of a voluntary Belfast Boston Sister Cities board in each city to oversee and monitor the development and delivery of the action plan.</li> <li>– Consider the attendance of the Lord Mayor, the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Development Committee or their nominees along with an Officer at the EU/US E Health Marketplace and Conference at a maximum cost of £10,000.</li> </ul>

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
Timeline:	August 2014
	Reporting Officer: John McGrillen