



Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Chinese New Year 2015
Date:	16 th December 2014
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officers:	Laura Leonard, EU and International Manager, ext 3577

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that our International Framework promotes education, business and leisure tourism within the three key markets of USA, India and China. Over the past two years, the European and International Unit has engaged with city stakeholders who are active in each of these markets to pursue and create new opportunities.
1.2	One of our city stakeholders, the Confucius Institute at the University of Ulster, has been very active in supporting our work and it has played a significant role in strengthening our relationship and activity in China. On 25 th February 2015 the Institute plans to host a major event to mark Chinese New Year and we are seeking approval from Members to provide £3,000 from our International budget as a contribution towards the costs of the event.
1.3	The Confucius Institute was officially opened in April 2012 by China's most senior female politician, Madame Liu Yandong, who is now the vice premier of China. It operates in partnership with the Zhejiang University of Media and Communications in south-eastern China, and is supported by the Education Department in Hubei Province and the Department for Education in Northern Ireland.
1.4	The Institute has established 8 Confucius Classroom Hubs to promote Chinese language and culture to young people across Northern Ireland. It provides around 25 teachers and resources to roll out lessons in Mandarin Chinese, cultural awareness programmes, events and conferences for schools, local communities and partner networks.
1.5	Belfast benefits from two hub schools, Aquinas Grammar School and Grosvenor Grammar School who share their teaching resources with 16 other schools. Over 7,000 pupils at these schools are learning about Chinese culture and Mandarin, and students will gain accreditation by sitting Chinese Proficiency and Youth Chinese Tests. Teachers and students also have an opportunity to visit

1.6	<p>China with most costs covered by the Confucius Institute. In return the schools will host Chinese students here in Belfast.</p> <p>The work of the Confucius Institute underpins BCC's International Framework by providing educational support for our young people which enhances their skills and opens new career opportunities. BCC has also benefited from support provided by Institute staff who have briefed members of the Development Committee in preparation for a visit from a delegation from Hefei, our Sister City in China. Support was also provided for our outward visit to Hefei for the Sister City Conference in October 2013 and Confucius Institute staff have also taken part in our recent careers event at City Hall.</p>
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2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>In January this year, the Confucius Institute brought the Little Flower Troupe - a renowned group of young talented singers and dancers to our city - to perform for the Lord Mayor at City Hall and to perform for a wider audience at the Waterfront Hall to celebrate Chinese New Year. In 2015, the Institute is seeking our support to host a similar event which will also highlight the achievements of our young people in learning Mandarin and promote continued valuable collaboration between our city and China.</p>
2.2	<p>The Chinese New Year celebration will be marked by a joint event with the Culture Office of the Chinese Embassy in London. The event in Belfast will bring senior Chinese Officials to our city including the Ambassador Xiaoming Liu, Minister Counsellor Mr Xiaowei Xiang from the Chinese Embassy in London and the Chinese Consul General for Northern Ireland. Senior university officials including the Vice Chancellor and Pro Vice Chancellor of the University of Ulster, MLAs, and Mayors from various Councils will also be in attendance, together with over 1,800 people including students from the hub schools, parents, teachers and the general public.</p>
2.3	<p>The event will include speeches from senior officials and students will receive Chinese Proficiency and Youth Chinese test certificates. A highlight of the event will be the performance of the Beijing Red Poppy Ladies' Percussion group who will perform Mulan. The Red Poppy Ladies' Percussion group is renowned in China and highly acclaimed worldwide. The group performed at the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing and this year performed again in Beijing for APEC. The group has performed in over 20 countries in venues such as Sydney Opera House, Cairo Opera House and Kennedy Art Centre USA.</p>
2.4	<p>The Confucius Institute is delighted to be able to bring the Red Poppy Ladies' Percussion group to Belfast and invites our Lord Mayor and Members of our Development Committee to join in their Chinese New Year celebration. The Institute has also requested that our Lord Mayor speak at the event.</p>

3	Resource Implications
3.1	<p>In 2014, all costs for the Chinese New Year celebration were covered by the Chinese Government; however, the Confucius Institute is now seeking financial contributions towards costs from local stakeholders for the 2015 celebration.</p>
3.2	<p>The total cost of the event is estimated at £50,000. This includes travel costs for</p>

	the performers to come to Belfast, hire of the venue and associated event costs. Resource implications for Belfast City Council's for this event are £3,000 contribution towards the event and staff support from the European and International Unit.
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4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are no equality and Good Relations considerations associated with this proposal.

5	Recommendations
5.1	<p>It is recommended that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Members note this report b) Approve a contribution of £3,000 towards the event c) Members attend the Chinese New Year celebration on February 25th 2015 d) The Lord Mayor attends and speaks at the event

6	Decision Tracking

7	Key to Abbreviations
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8	Documents Attached
No documents attached.	