



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	Boston Bruins – Provision of Hospitality
Date:	20 August 2010
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Relevant Background Information

The Boston Bruins are one of the leading ice hockey teams in the United States, competing in the National Hockey League. Ice hockey is a major sport in the United States with a popularity similar to that of American Football and Baseball.

As a celebration to mark the tenth anniversary of the opening of the Odyssey Arena, Belfast's Ice Hockey team, the Belfast Giants, are due to play a challenge match against the Boston Bruins on 2 October 2010. This will be the first time the Bruins will have played outside North America and the event is attracting significant media attention on both sides of the Atlantic.

In recognition of the potential to present Belfast in a positive way and as a location for major sporting events, the Council at its meeting of 1 June 2010, endorsed the recommendation of the Development Committee to underwrite the costs of the event to a maximum of £40k. A copy of the report presented to Committee is attached in Appendix 1.

Invest NI have also agreed to sponsor the game as they see it as a means of attracting potential investors to attend the event as part of a wider promotional programme. Invest NI hope to bring up to ten potential investors to visit the city at that time. Tourism Ireland are also hoping to have a delegation of North American tour operators and journalists to experience the tourism potential of the city. The US Consul also sees the event as an opportunity to promote a positive image of the city not only in Boston, but across the whole of the East Coast of the United States.

Initial approaches to the Office of the Mayor of Boston suggested that the Mayor, Thomas M. Menino who has previously addressed Belfast City Council, might wish to attend the match. The Lord Mayor has issued an invitation to Mayor Menino and he has indicated that he may be able to accept the Lord Mayor's invitation.

Key Issues

The Council has agreed to invest up to £40k towards the cost of the Ice Hockey game. In addition to promoting the image of the city to a general US audience, there is also the opportunity to develop civic linkages between Belfast and Boston and to demonstrate the Council's support to potential investors and tour operators who are bringing tourists to the city.

The various partners involved, particularly Invest NI, Sport NI, Tourism Ireland and the US Consulate believe a civic reception in City Hall would greatly enhance the credibility of the city with potential investors, tour operators and journalists from the Boston area. The Lord Mayor has expressed a willingness to host a drinks reception, followed by a civic dinner on Friday 1 October, the night before the ice hockey game. Such an event would help create a very positive impression with potential investors in the city. This is particularly true should Mayor Menino be part of the visiting delegation.

Resource Implications

The cost of the event is estimated at £8k maximum.

Staff resources will be required to organise the event and any associated visit programme for Mayor Menino should he agree to travel to Belfast. These will be met by Council staff at no additional cost.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Council should maximise the opportunity to build a civic relationship with Boston and with potential investors from the New England area by agreeing to host a drinks reception followed by a civic dinner on Friday 1 October 2010.

It is proposed that the guest list should not exceed 200 people including the 51 City Councillors, subject to availability.

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 – Report to Development Committee on 12 May 2010 – Visit of the Boston Bruins Ice Hockey Team