



<b>Subject:</b>	International Relations update
<b>Date:</b>	08 June 2016
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<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	<b>Yes</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>No</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	<b>Yes</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>No</b> <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide an update on recent international work in relation to Sister Cities linkages as well as international business activity, and to set out some emerging priorities for action.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Note the international activity update for the year to date and agree to a future report, to be presented to the Committee in September, setting out how this activity should be progressed, in the context of a wider International Relations Framework.</li></ul>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main report</b>
3.1	Members will be aware that the Lord Mayor, Chief Executive and a number of Councillors and Chief Officers have been involved in a range of recent international business visits and have hosted international delegations in the City. These included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Business visit to Boston, in February 2016</li></ul>

- Developing a range of potential education and business linkages with Nashville, in March 2016
- Progressing Sister City linkages, including the identification of opportunities for future collaboration between Belfast and Shenyang, in May 2016
- Promoting the city as a creative business location through a visit to the South X South West international creative business and music event in Austin, Texas, in March 2016
- An enhanced presence at MIPIM in March 2016 (which was the subject of a report to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in May 2016)
- Enhancing our business partnership with Invest NI which has included the Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor and Chief Executive hosting business delegations and inward visits in City Hall as well as Chief Officers becoming involved in a range of investment meetings alongside Invest NI colleagues.

3.2

In addition to the above, the Lord Mayor, Deputy Lord Mayor and Chief Executive continue to host a significant number of international visitors to the city, and there is a significant volume of work under way with partners to facilitate their international connections and promote opportunities for education, business and cultural links. Likewise, the Council has committed to a programme of investment in the city centre and this is reliant on promoting the opportunities for private sector investment and growth, including commitments from international partners. Finally, we are working to promote Belfast as an international business and tourism destination and this requires building partnerships with organisations such as Invest NI to understand how we can provide the “city proposition” and “gateway services” alongside the wider range of incentives that they promote to encourage additional inward investment.

3.3

All of this work requires a coordinated and cohesive approach to maximise the return on investment. It also requires an understanding of where the Council can add value to the work of other partners and what the resourcing implications of this work might be. To that end, Committee has agreed to a new International Relations Framework that will take account of these commitments as well as considering future development opportunities and identifying the specific role and priorities for the Council moving forward.

3.4 In the interim, the recent visits and connections have presented a number of emerging opportunities which will be considered as part of the new International Relations Framework. These include:

Boston

3.5 The Boston visits – and subsequent follow-up actions – have identified a number of key areas of work which include:

- Secured and delivered the first Friendship Four Festival of Ice Hockey Tournament in November 2015 and secured agreement for the follow-up event in November 2016 (as approved by the City Growth and Regeneration Committee)
- Confirmed plans for an inward trade mission to Belfast in Autumn/Winter 2016, in partnership with the Boston Irish Business Association
- Secured increased co-operation for the J1 visa programme for students from Queen’s and Ulster Universities
- Secured over \$20,000 for two Belfast schools for equipment and literacy programmes, under the Irish American Partnership.
- Explored and partially developed a Youth Transformation Project addressing barriers to employment for youth in both cities. Further exploratory work on this project required, to finalise details of feasibility
- Connected the Education Authority of Northern Ireland with its Boston counterparts to support exchange and learning
- Promoted investment opportunities in Belfast in collaboration with Invest NI colleagues.

Nashville

3.6 With respect to Nashville, this was the first visit made by Belfast City Council in a number of years. The visit (from 10-16 March 2016) was an exploratory one. The objective was to scope the scale of potential for additional exchanges and partnerships between organisations in both cities, and to establish the added value that Belfast City Council could play in developing these linkages. The visit was productive, and the following opportunities were identified:

- Learning around the development of new venues and visitor attractions, focusing on key themes such as music and culture
- Opportunities to link the Innovation Factory with the Nashville Entrepreneur Centre and to develop initiatives such as residencies for entrepreneurs and

	<p>potential to promote Belfast as a European base for Nashville companies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opportunities to work with Invest NI to undertake additional FDI promotion work in the Nashville and Tennessee areas, with opportunities for new investments currently being pursued</li> <li>- Opportunities to consolidate and build on Queen’s University Belfast’s long-standing links with Vanderbilt University and potential for new engagements between Ulster University and Belmont University (based on introductions made through Council contacts)</li> <li>- Opportunities for student exchanges with two new exchanges already in place and Nashville students due to come to Belfast in January 2017</li> <li>- Identification of key contacts within the television and music industry who are open to further engagement around TV production opportunities and joint bidding for conferences and music events.</li> </ul>
	<p><u>International Sister Cities Summit in Dublin</u></p>
3.7	<p>Members will also be aware that Belfast hosted delegations from Boston and Nashville on 19-21 April, in advance of their participation in the International Sister Cities Summit in Dublin from 21-23 April 2016.</p>
3.8	<p>During the two day Belfast programme, delegates from Boston (led by Boston Belfast Chair John Donovan) and Nashville (led by Councillor Jim Schulman), engaged in an intensive round of visits and meetings. The programme included sessions in community development, peace and reconciliation, cyber security innovation, spatial planning, education, legal systems, culture and tourism. It allowed delegates the opportunity to understand the new Belfast Agenda, the Council and City’s ambitions for inclusive economic growth, and the partnership approach with stakeholders to achieve these ambitions.</p>
3.10	<p><u>Shenyang</u></p> <p>The Lord Mayor led a delegation of Councillors and officers – including the Chief Executive – to the city of Shenyang in China in May 2016. The visit – which was planned to coincide with business and education delegations from Queen’s University and Invest NI – marked the first visit to Shenyang since the signing of a friendly cooperation agreement between the cities in 2013. A number of introductory meetings took place on issues such as tourism development, inward investment and cooperation on education and training. A further report will be</p>

	<p>brought back to a future meeting of the Committee to set out an agreed way forward in order to maximise the connections established.</p>
3.11	<p><u>SXSW</u></p> <p>SXSW is the world's largest event focusing on the music, film and interactive sectors. It involves a range of presentations, workshops, promotional events and showcasing opportunities for international businesses involved in this area of work. The event has been running for thirty years and Belfast City Council has attended over the last eight years, in partnership with organisations such as Invest NI and Generator NI, as well as individual music and digital businesses who have been taking part in the event.</p>
3.12	<p>In March 2016, the Deputy Lord Mayor along with a Council Officer took part in the event. The Council hosted two key networking events over two days, with more than 450 international businesses in attendance. Key attendees included representatives from Virginia Tech, Sony Entertainment, Kobalt Music, Music Cities network, City of Toronto, City of Austin, Tech City, Stubhub, United Airlines (digital), Capitol Factory and Spotify.</p>
3.13	<p>The Northern Ireland delegation comprised 15 digital and music companies (supported by Invest NI) as well as 5 bands/musicians who had applied directly and been accepted to participate in the music element of the programme.</p>
3.14	<p>While it is still early to be specific about outcomes, participants have noted the following achievements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Increase in revenue of £100,000 among participants</li> <li>– £185,000 of potential sales identified and to be followed up</li> <li>– 1 company established relationship with new investor in relation to future seed round funding</li> <li>– 1 company used SXSW to identify a number of US collaborators who want to run clinical trials with their products - an essential precursor to being able to sell medical technology games in USA</li> <li>– 1 company generated significant feedback on new product offering and secured meetings with several high potential clients including Disney, Microsoft and Khan Academy. New leads have been developed and have secured follow up meetings and pitch opportunities with several potential</li> </ul>

	clients.
3.15	All of these opportunities and leads will now be considered and as part of the work on the new International Relations Framework which will be presented to the Committee in September 2016. This Framework will consider how the City can benefit from its international connections, as well as looking at how Belfast presents itself internationally and will seek to establish a number of priority areas of work to be progressed by the Council and its partners.
3.16	It is proposed that the International Relations Framework will be outcomes-based and will take account of resources – both staff resources and financial resources – required to support implementation. It is likely that it will lead to focusing resources on a small number of priority actions that are aligned to ambitions set out within the Belfast Agenda. The International Relations Framework will also be an important mechanism for implementation of the Place Positioning Strategy.
3.17	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u> No specific financial or resource allocations required at this point.
3.18	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u> The new International Relations Framework will be equality screened.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	None