



Subject:	BelTech Conference 2017
Date:	8 March 2017
Reporting Officer:	Donal Durkan, Director of Development, ext 3470
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Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to recommend a funding contribution of £8,000 towards the delivery of the Belfast Technology Conference 2017 (BelTech).
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Committee is asked to <ul style="list-style-type: none">Consider and approve the request for sponsorship of £8,000 to support the BelTech conference to be held in Belfast on 5–7 April 2017.Note that Officers are adopting a process for assessing sponsorship requests aligned to the Belfast Agenda targets and outputs. A future report will be brought to Committee for endorsement.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u> <p>Members will be aware that one of the key priorities of the Belfast Agenda is Growing the Economy. Central to this pillar of activity is the commitment to increase business start up, build support for business growth and encourage additional investment in the City.</p> <p>Belfast's economic growth in recent years has been driven by technology-focused</p>

3.2	<p>businesses operating across a range of sectors. These companies are both FDI businesses and small, indigenous companies that are developing products and services here that are being exported worldwide or have the potential to do so.</p>
3.3	<p>Over the course of the last few years, there have been a number of annual tech-focused business conferences and events that have sought to showcase best practice, encourage collaboration between businesses and encourage young people to become engaged in the tech sector. The growing support for the Smart City Agenda means that the Council and the City are now looking at technology not only as a business product but also as a way of changing the way we all do business.</p>
3.4	<p>Belfast City Council supported the inaugural Belfast Technology Conference event which took place in April 2014 and the subsequent conferences in April 2015 and 2016. Sponsorship from the Council was reduced from £15,000 to £10,000 in 2016 with the view to reducing the reliance on Council funding each year as the conference grows and becomes self-sustaining.</p>
3.5	<p>The 2016 conference took place at Titanic Belfast and brought together tech and business leaders as well as politicians from Belfast, USA and Europe including Jascha Franklin-Hodge, Chief Information Officer for the City of Boston's Department of Innovation and Technology, and Doug Safford, Vice President of Technology Innovation at Allstate in Chicago.</p>
3.6	<p>The conference helped inform technology professionals and businesses of the emerging technologies and approaches that allow them to innovate and compete effectively at a global level and it also helped educate and inspire kids/parents/teachers about the potential of a career in Digital Technology, thereby building the digital skill base and reinforcing Belfast's global lead in this area.</p>
3.7	<p>BelTech 2016 attracted a total of 649 attendees, which is an increase of 250 since its inception in 2014. BelTech 2017 will now incorporate an extra day to the conference and will feature a strategic digital marketing campaign to attract more attendees from ROI and beyond.</p> <p>The 2017 conference will again be held at Titanic Belfast and will target technology professionals, tech business owners and those interested in establishing a business, as</p>

3.8	<p>well as post primary school children, teachers and university students.</p>
3.9	<p>Key thematic areas for this year's conference include Software Engineering, which will be led by Kainos and Liberty IT and Machine Learning, Connected Learning and Immersive Technology which will be driven by input from the UK Digital Catapult.</p>
3.10	<p>BelTech 2017 will now run over 3 days and will feature the following:</p>
3.11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 & 6 April: Days 1 and 2 will focus on technology professionals and businesses and will feature curated conversations on the themes identified above. The Lord Mayor of Belfast will be invited to open the event and a global expert will present the initial session. The conversation sessions will be moderated by a Belfast entrepreneur and will feature respected Belfast and Global experts. • All sessions will be recorded and, ideally, be broadcast live via the conference website to a global audience. The emphasis of attendees will be on business networking and discussion of success stories and potential of technology. • 7 April: Day 3 will focus on Post Primary school children and teachers and will feature a mix of engaging technology demos and conversational sessions as above. The emphasis for attendees will be engaging technology demos for kids and discussion of career pathways and opportunities. • Exhibition: Throughout the 3 days, an exhibition of leading NI and Global high tech organisations will run to allow attendees to get a more detailed understanding of the people, products and innovations covered in the Conference. Education providers will also be among the exhibitors to provide advice and guidance to students. <p>The overall aims and benefits of the BelTech conference include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaining an awareness of emerging technologies and practices that will improve participants' effectiveness and career development • Interacting with highly successful tech/business leaders and role models • Building personal networks and enhancing career prospects • Contributing to building a vibrant technology community and culture in Belfast and NI that can compete effectively on a global scale • Contributing to the NI Innovation Strategy • Informing students and young people about the types of technology careers

	<p>available and advising them on routes into employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspiring students and young people by successful role models and their stories • Supporting teachers to provide quality careers guidance and advice on future employment opportunities for students in this field • Developing awareness among key international companies of Belfast capability as a source of technology talent.
3.12	<p>The finance requested from Council is £8,000, a reduction of £2,000 from the previous year. Sponsorship of the event will provide Council the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full page advertisement in conference magazine (includes editorial); • Primetime positioning of Council logo on all materials including website and all promotional materials • Prime exhibition space • 10 Delegate passes.
3.13	<p>It is proposed that the delegate passes will be offered to small businesses located at the Innovation Factory. A number of Council Officers will also attend to staff the exhibition stand. Should Members wish to attend the event, they should advise Officers and arrangements can be made to enable them to do so.</p>
3.14	<p>Members will be aware that Business Support activities delivered by the Council's Economic Development Unit concentrate primarily on starting a business, growing a business and investing in Belfast as well as supporting employability and skills work.</p>
3.15	<p>The range of initiatives delivered or supported in each of these areas is developed based on research and engagement with partners to identify what will make the most significant contributions to the outcomes set out in the Belfast Agenda.</p>
3.16	<p>In addition to programme activity, there are also opportunities to engage with local events – such as Beltech – that are aligned to the Council's strategic priorities. At present, there is no objective approach by which decisions can be taken on approaches for funding that are made to the Council, outside of a broad assessment as to the ways in which they can contribute towards delivery of the Belfast Agenda outcomes.</p> <p>However, in order to take a targeted approach to supporting inclusive economic growth and ensuring participation by the most disadvantaged and under-represented groups in</p>

<p>3.17</p> <p>3.18</p> <p>3.19</p> <p>3.20</p> <p>3.21</p>	<p>our community, it is proposed that a more objective process is established in the future when assessing funding requests. This will ensure that the Council is seen to align itself to relevant activities to support its ambitions for inclusive economic growth – particularly those that involved ethnic minorities, persons with a disability or persons that are long-term unemployed/economically inactive.</p> <p>It is therefore proposed that Officers will develop an assessment process by which decisions can be taken about how to best invest Council resources in events of this type.</p> <p>This will enable a more objective assessment of any funding or sponsorship requests. It will also create greater transparency around funding decisions. An update on this will be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The total budget requested is £8,000 which will be met from Economic Development Budgets. This has already been set aside in the 2017/18 estimates.</p> <p>Organisers are forecasting an additional £32,000 in sponsorship from other private and public sector partners. They consider that, in the longer-term, the event will become self-funding.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>No specific equality or good relations considerations.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Appendices</p>
<p>4.1</p>	<p>None</p>