



Subject:	International Engagement Activities
Date:	8 September 2021
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
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<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek funding approval for a number of international engagement activities, in line with the Committee workplan priorities.
2.0	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Approve the attendance of Committee Chair/Deputy Chair or nominee and one officer at the Eurocities AGM, taking place 3-5 November in Leipzig, at a maximum cost of £2500, subject to prevailing COVID restrictions</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate a City Hall reception on the occasion of the visit to Belfast by the US and Russian Women's Olympic Ice Hockey Teams, as part of their visit to Belfast from 7-12 November 2021, at a maximum cost of £3,000, depending on numbers attending.</li> <li>• Agree to provide financial support to the Confucius Institute up to a maximum for £5,000 for the current financial year, in order to support the Council's work with China.</li> </ul>
3.0	<p><b>Main Report</b></p> <p>3.1 <b><u>Attendance at Eurocities AGM</u></b></p> <p>Members will be aware that Belfast City Council has been a member of the Eurocities network for 20 years and proactively engages in a broad spectrum of thematic working areas including Culture, Environment, Knowledge Society, Mobility, Economic Development and Social Affairs. As a result of Council's participation in this network of over 140 major cities and municipalities, Council has secured transnational European funding, showcased city best practice, exchanged policy and strategic concepts to help develop local activity and contributed to raising the importance of the role of cities in delivering European objectives.</p> <p>3.2 The Eurocities Annual Conference provides the opportunity for elected representatives and senior city officials to input into the organisation's workplan, discuss pertinent city issues and network, collaborate and debate with European officials and representatives from other cities across the network. The 2021 event takes place in Leipzig from 3-4 November 2021. The theme of the conference is "The Power of Cities – Transforming Society". It will focus on how the "Green New Deal" is being implemented at local level and will explore additional mechanisms to push forward the role of cities as key conduits to move forward at pace in a volatile economic climate.</p> <p>3.3 Invitations to the conference have been issued and it is hoped that as many cities as possible will be represented in person for the November event. Members are requested to approve the attendance of the Chair or Deputy Chair or nominee plus one Officer at the Annual Meeting at a maximum budget of £2,500. Attendance in person will be subject to Council advice regarding the implementation of COVID restrictions at that time.</p> <p>3.4 <b><u>Women's Ice Hockey: 8-12 November 2021</u></b></p> <p>Members will be aware that over a five-year period from 2015, the Council supported the work of the Odyssey Trust in developing and delivering the Friendship Four Festival. This tournament was a central plank of the Belfast-Boston Sister City relationship and was used as a platform to promote Belfast as a study, investment, and tourist destination. The event</p>

itself attracted more than 100 visitors from USA and generated significant associated tourism revenue for Belfast. In 2019, it was expanded to incorporate a Women's Tournament. Both events also acted as an avenue to provide positive international TV exposure for Belfast in the United States and Canada, reaching over 150 million households.

3.5 Based on the success of the Friendship Four model, the Odyssey Trust is currently developing plans to host the Women's Ice Hockey Teams that will represent both the USA and Russia at the 2022 Olympic Games. By way of context, the US Team is joint favourite for the Games and Russia is presently ranked 4<sup>th</sup> in the world.

3.6 Whilst the proposition is being refined, it is expected that the programme will reflect the Friendship Four model and include not only sporting fixtures, but also community and educational outreach activity. As part of their engagement activities, it is proposed that a civic reception for both teams will take place in City Hall (COVID restrictions permitting). Subject to approval, the event will take place on 10 November. The costs associated with hosting the event will not exceed £3,000.

3.7 **Confucius Institute Memorandum of Understanding with Belfast City Council**

Members will be aware that the Confucius Institute in Northern Ireland was established in partnership with Ulster University in Belfast, in 2011. Its role is comparable to that of the British Council, in that it serves to promote Chinese culture, education and language across the world. One of the most visible examples of the work of the Confucius Institute is in the network of 48 Chinese teachers based in 111 schools across NI, working in 8 hub schools, two of which are in Belfast (Grosvenor and Aquinas).

3.8 The Institute has also been working closely with those NI councils that are engaged in activity within China, and has greatly assisted Belfast City Council in its work with Sister City Shenyang since the signing of our agreement in 2016. This includes advice and guidance on business etiquette, translation of key documentation and development of visit programmes and support in hosting relevant groups coming to Belfast. As this work evolves, Confucius Directors have now engaged with the council to explore the potential to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding between our organisations in order to formalise the support services and agree an outline activity plan. They consider that this approach will help them manage resources more effectively. Based on the outline programme of activity, it is proposed that a budget allocation of £5,000 is set aside for this work. The outputs will

3.9	be managed and reviewed by officers in order to ensure value for money and to inform future support.
3.10	<p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>These initiatives fall within the International Relations Framework which has been equality screened.</p>
3.11	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The specific financial allocations set out above include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up to £2,500 to support attendance of the Committee Chair/Deputy Chair or delegated nominee plus one Officer at the Eurocities AGM in Leipzig on 3-5 November 2021</li> <li>• Up to £3,000 to support a civic reception to mark the visit of the US and Russia Women’s Ice Hockey Teams to Belfast in November 2021</li> <li>• £5,000 budgetary support for a new Memorandum of Understanding and programme of support to the Confucius Institute, to support the council’s economic development work in China.</li> </ul>
3.12	These budgets have been set aside within the EU and International Relations budget 2021/22.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b>
	N/A