



Subject:	Update on Harkin International Disability Employment Summit
Date:	11 May 2022
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
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Restricted Reports	
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"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update members on the Harkin International Disability Employment Summit which will take place in Belfast in early June 2022. This is the first time that this international conference has taken place outside of the USA.
2.0	Recommendations

2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the Harkin International Disability Employment Summit which will take place in Belfast on 7-8 June 2022 • Note the commitment to securing a significant legacy from this event, including the proposals around access to employment, mentoring and work experience • Promote the event through their networks and contacts in order to maximise its impact and support the wider discussion on a new disability employment strategy which is being led by the Department for Communities (DfC).
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>The Harkin Summit was conceived in 2016 by Senator Tom Harkin. Senator Harkin represented Iowa in the United States Congress for more than four decades up until 2015. In his early years in the Senate, he led on legislation to protect the civil rights of millions of Americans with physical and mental disabilities. This work led to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).</p>
3.2	<p>The Summit is internationally recognised as a platform that brings together leaders and activists across business, government, philanthropy, VCSE sector and academia to highlight and address disability employment issues, showcase best practice and success, build relationships and challenge for change.</p>
3.3	<p>The event will take place in Belfast on 7 and 8 June 2022 in the ICC Belfast. This is the first time that the event is to take place outside of USA. It is being organised locally by the Harkin Institute and the Department for Communities. The SP&R Committee recently agreed to host the 7 June conference reception in Belfast City Hall and the Laord Mayor has been invited to make an address at the event which will involve a number of key advocates and business leaders.</p>
3.4	<p>It is expected that the event will attract more than 400 international delegates over the two days. A programme for the event can be accessed using the link: https://eventfulbelfast.eventsair.com/harkinsummit2022/programme. Attendance at the event is free of charge and members are encouraged to register and to promote the event through their networks and contacts.</p>
3.5	

3.6	<p>In parallel with the conference, DfC has recently been working on a new strategy to support access to employment for those with a disability. This strategy recognises that disabled people are much less likely to be in sustainable employment than those who are not disabled. It will establish a long-term commitment to reducing the disability employment gap in Northern Ireland. This strategy will align to and deliver on an employment chapter within an overarching disability strategy for NI, a commitment under New Decade New Approach. Initial engagement and research work has been under way for a number of months and it is anticipated that the new strategy will be finalised within the coming financial year. The Department is also using this event as a launchpad for a range of legacy interventions to increase access to employment for those with disabilities. This includes a commitment to a number of new employment opportunities (including within the Northern Ireland Civil Service), mentoring support and work placements.</p>
3.7	<p>Many local organisations will promote their activities during the event so it offers an opportunity to both learn from good practice and to promote the many positive interventions that are under way in the city to promote access to employment for those with a disability.</p>
3.8	<p><u>Finance and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no finance or resource implications for Belfast City Council in hosting this event. The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed to offer the City Hall for the conference reception.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>By highlighting good practice on matters relating to disabled access, this conference will have a positive impact on those with a disability.</p>
4.0	Appendices - Documents attached
	None