

## CABINET MEETING – 20 JUNE 2012

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

**Title of Report:**

International Strategy – Annual Report January 2011 to March 2012

**Author(s):**

Chief Executive

**Purpose of Report:**

This report provides an overview of activity undertaken from January 2011 to March 2012 in relation to the city's International Strategy, highlights the benefits this has generated, and identifies the outline Work Programme for the year 2012/13.

**Description of Decision:**

Cabinet is requested to:

- note the level and nature of activity developed under the International Strategy during 2011/12
- endorse the series of actions proposed for 2012/13

**Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework?** Yes

**If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework**

**Suggested reason(s) for Decision:**

It was agreed to report annually on the International Strategy both to Cabinet and the Partnership Board. Following its consideration by Cabinet, the attached report will be considered by the Sunderland Partnership.

**Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:**

No alternative options have been considered.

**Impacts analysed;**

Equality  Privacy  Sustainability  Crime and Disorder

**Is this a "Key Decision" as defined in the Constitution?** No

**Is it included in the Forward Plan?** No

**Scrutiny Committee**

**Scrutiny Lead Member for Skills, Economy and Regeneration**



**INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY – ANNUAL REPORT JANUARY 2011 to March 2012**

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**1.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of activity undertaken from January 2011 to March 2012 in relation to the city's International Strategy, highlights the benefits this has generated, and identifies the outline Work Programme for 2012/13.

**2.0 Description of Decision**

- 2.1 Cabinet is requested to:
- i) note the level and nature of activity developed under the International Strategy during 2011/12
  - ii) endorse the series of actions proposed for 2012/13

**3.0 Background**

- 3.1 The Sunderland Partnership's first International Strategy was endorsed as a consultative draft in October 2006 to provide a co-ordinated and strategic approach to international working within the city. Following revision of the Sunderland Strategy, the International Strategy was updated and endorsed by the Partnership Board and City Council's Cabinet in October 2008 to run in parallel to the Sunderland Strategy for the period 2008 to 2025.
- 3.2 The overall aim of the International Strategy is 'to ensure the City's international engagement supports the Sunderland Partnership in achieving its vision for Sunderland, maximising the opportunities and benefits for the city and its residents'.
- 3.3 This overall aim of the International Strategy is underpinned by five Key Areas of Activity. These focus on: attracting and retaining investment and supporting business growth; including an international dimension in the city's educational and cultural activities; sharing good practice with cities facing similar challenges; influencing EU policy and legislation; and raising the city's profile.
- 3.4 Implementation of the International Strategy is overseen by a Partnership-wide Steering Group, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor of the University and supported by the City Council's International Team.

- 3.5 An annual report is prepared each calendar year for the Sunderland Partnership and for the City Council's Cabinet. This is the fifth annual report. Reports have been prepared on a calendar year basis to date. However, it is proposed that future annual reports will run from 1 April to 31 March and this report therefore covers the fifteen month period from January 2011 to March 2012.

#### **4.0 Current Position**

- 4.1 The Annual Report for 2011/12 is attached as Annex A. This has been prepared drawing on information provided by members of the International Strategy Steering Group, including representatives of each Directorate within the City Council. The report (Ai) provides an overview in section 6 of some of the key developments during the year, which are also summarised briefly in paragraphs 4.4 to 4.7. These are followed in the Annual Report by notable activity under each of the five Key Areas of Activity identified for the International Strategy, highlighting the progress made and benefits generated from engagement in each area. A summary of communications activity undertaken during 2011/12 is also given at section 7 of the Annual Report.
- 4.2 A more detailed record of progress against each of the key themes and actions in the Work Programme for 2011/12 is set out at Aii. Key information is included under 'Progress from January 2011 – March 2012' and 'Amendments Proposed for 2012/13 Work Programme'. An Executive Summary of the Annual Report will also be produced to facilitate communications activity.
- 4.3 The landscape within which the Steering Group and its constituent partner organisations operate continues to be influenced by policy developments at national level by the coalition government and significant reductions in public expenditure. This wider context is significant in view of the overall aim of the International Strategy, which is designed to ensure the city's international engagement underpins the mainstream objectives which partners are seeking to deliver.
- 4.4 Relationships with the city's formal international partners have been strengthened during 2011/12. The city's Friendship Agreement with Washington DC was renewed for a further five years and five project proposals were developed setting out initial co-operation activities to be undertaken during the next stage of the Agreement, building on joint activity to date. The first visit by Sunderland pupils to Harbin took place, and the first Harbin software company to set up a business in Sunderland also did so during this period. Co-operation with both Harbin and Washington DC provided opportunities for Sunderland software companies to explore business partnership opportunities. As the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the city's twinning relationship with Saint-Nazaire approaches in 2013, school partnership working was increased, links with the University and College were consolidated, and Sunderland companies again offered work placements to postgraduate students. Young people from Sunderland travelled to Essen to take part in the European Youth Arts Exhibition as part of the well-established

youth arts exchange. The city's economic development project with Mbombela Local Municipality in South Africa, as part of the Commonwealth Local Government Good Practice Scheme, was completed successfully.

- 4.5 The City's strategic partnership with the British Council as a key national partner in promoting the international dimension in education, which was initiated in 2008, has continued to be strengthened during this period opening up a number of opportunities. The approach developed within Sunderland of working strategically in clusters, which maximises the impact of those initiatives developed centrally by the local authority for children and young people in schools across the city, increases opportunities for joint working with the British Council and is regarded by them as good practice.
- 4.6 Joint working with regional and national partners in supporting city businesses to engage internationally has also continued to be developed during this year. This has included significant engagement with Sunderland Software City in relation to opportunities through the partnerships in Washington DC and China, as well as discussions regarding potential inward investment projects, and co-operation with UKTI.
- 4.7 Sunderland's membership of EUROCITIES, and the city's designation as a World Health Organisation (WHO) European Healthy City for the period to 2013, has opened up opportunities to exchange experience, influence policy and inform service delivery in key policy areas. Delivery of the city's first two EU trans-national projects developed within EUROCITIES has also begun during this period.
- 4.8 Creation of more than 2,000 new jobs was announced by overseas-owned companies in the city from January 2011 to March 2012, bringing £700 million of capital investment. Most of the new jobs were associated with Nissan's expansion programme, including investments by key suppliers from the USA, Japan and France. Other significant developments during the 15 month period included investment by an American automotive company in its Sunderland plant which is dedicated to the export market, and Nissan building in its six millionth car.
- 4.9 The establishment of the city's Economic Leadership Board during 2011 presents opportunities to strengthen linkages between the international agenda and economic development activity in the years ahead.
- 4.10 Measurement of benefits has continued to be gauged in the same way as in previous years, recording areas of progress against the key themes and actions within the Work Programme. In addition, an exercise was carried out within the City Council during 2011 to assess the impact of the city's international engagement in relation to economic development.
- 4.11 The changing environment within which partners are operating means that there is a continued need for the 2012/13 Work Programme to be tightly focussed to allow significant benefits to be generated against key priorities within the limited resources available. The importance of close partnership-

working within the city in this area of work will be even more important to facilitate this.

- 4.12 An over-riding priority will continue to be given during 2012/13 to the generation of economic benefits and the contribution the international dimension can bring to the economic wellbeing of the city in the short, medium and longer term. The proposed work programme for the International Strategy Steering Group therefore continues to reflect strongly the contribution the Group's work can make as we seek to strengthen the local economy in difficult times.
- 4.13 It is proposed to introduce a single series of actions for 2012/13, combining areas of work which have been separated between key themes and actions within the Work programme in previous years. These are set out in section 8 of the Annual Report.
- 4.14 The proposed range of actions for 2012/13 recognises the need to consolidate activity in existing areas to ensure benefits of the city's partnership-wide approach are maximised. The introduction of one additional action, to consider a broader partnership approach to build on activity led by Sunderland Software City in India, reflects the potential for collective engagement with both the University and College and wider awareness of Sunderland in India.

## **5.0 Reasons for the Decision**

- 5.1 It was agreed to report annually on the International Strategy both to Cabinet and the Partnership Board. Following its consideration by Cabinet, the attached report will also be considered by the Sunderland Partnership.

## **6.0 Alternative Options**

- 6.1 No alternative options have been considered.

## **7.0 Relevant Consultations**

### **7.1 Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications.

## **8.0 Background Papers**

- 8.1 The following background papers are available from the Office of the Chief Executive:
  - International Strategy
  - International Strategy Steering Group Terms of Reference and Minutes
  - Washington DC Steering Committee Minutes
  - Harbin Steering Committee Minutes