

Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 2 September 2014

Lord Provost visit to Qatar

Item number	7.2
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	All

Executive summary

This report considers the invitation extended by the CEO of Qatar Airways to the Lord Provost to visit Qatar. The proposed civic arrangement follows the launch of the new route in Edinburgh earlier in the year.

As previously reported, Qatar has been identified as a target location for attracting inward investment. A new direct flight from Edinburgh to Doha started in May 2014 and this will increase the potential of attracting inward investment. This visit is an opportunity to raise further Edinburgh's profile in the region.

It is proposed that the Lord Provost travels to Qatar on 28 September and returns on 1 October 2014, accompanied by a City Officer.

Links

Coalition pledges	P15
Council outcomes	CO7 and CO8
Single Outcome Agreement	SO1

Lord Provost visit to Qatar

Recommendation

- 1.1 To accept the invitation from Qatar Airways and approve the Lord Provost's visit to Qatar. The Lord Provost will be accompanied by a City Officer and permission to take the civic chain is required.

Background

- 2.1 Qatar is ranked as one of the richest nations in the world. The country's wealth has come from natural gas and this has transformed Qatar's economy. Rapid economic growth has resulted in the population increasing from under 120,000 in 1970 to over 2,000,000 in 2014. The country is also undergoing wide scale transformation as they prepare to host the World Cup in 2022.
- 2.2 There is a long-standing link between Qatar and the UK, especially London. Qatari money was used to build London's tallest building, the Shard, and develop London's Chelsea Barracks. Qatari investors also own the Olympic Village.
- 2.3 In addition to investing heavily in property and businesses abroad the Qatari Government is investing in Qatar's economic future. The Government recognises that gas reserves, their main source of wealth, are finite. As a result the Government published their 2030 strategy. Within it they outline the focus that will be placed on research and development in order to create a knowledge economy within Qatar.
- 2.4 The City of Edinburgh Council's (CEC) Economic Strategy 'A Strategy for Jobs 2012-2017' highlights the importance of Edinburgh's international links. Doha (Qatar's capital) is one of six priority cities within the strategy and a range of activities have been taken to develop the relationship between Doha and Edinburgh.
- 2.5 For example, Qatar's focus on developing a knowledge economy presents an opportunity for Edinburgh's universities to play an important role. In June 2013 CEC led a delegation of Edinburgh's four universities visited Qatar to explore the potential of developing new research links.
- 2.6 Edinburgh's universities have strengths in several areas of interest to Qatar and this presents an opportunity to form research collaborations. These areas include the Qatar 'Grand Challenge' fields of Energy security, Water security, Cyber security and healthcare. Research links will help to strengthen the connection between Edinburgh and Qatar.

- 2.7 The universities can also play an important role in developing the connection by attracting more Qatari students. In November 2013 CEC led a visit to the Qatar International College Fair, the biggest student fair in Qatar. The four Edinburgh universities joined together to promote Edinburgh to Qatari students.

Main report

- 3.1 In November 2013 Qatar Airways announced that their new direct flight from Edinburgh to Doha which commenced on 28 May 2014. The service is running five days a week using a Boeing Dreamliner. It is the first scheduled Dreamliner service from Scotland.
- 3.2 The Lord Provost welcomed the CEO of Qatar Airways, Akbar Al Baker, to Edinburgh on 24 March 2014 at Edinburgh Airport. Following that visit the Lord Provost has been invited personally to travel to Qatar in a civic capacity.
- 3.3 It is recommended that the Lord Provost is given approval to travel to Qatar. This visit has the potential to significantly boost Edinburgh's profile within Qatar. This is likely to result increased visitors and investment.

Measures of success

- 4.1 Raise Edinburgh's profile in Qatar.
- 4.2 Promote Edinburgh as an investment location.
- 4.3 Highlight Edinburgh's research expertise.

Financial impact

- 5.1 The cost of flights and accommodation for the Lord Provost and a City Officer will be covered in full by Qatar Airways.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 There are no foreseen risks arising from this report.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 There are no equalities impacts arising from the visit.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 Travel arrangements will be made in accordance with the Council's Sustainable Travel Plan.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 The CEO of Qatar Airways is hosting the visit and organising the full programme for the Lord Provost.

Background reading/external references

None.

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Links

Coalition pledges	P15 - Work with public organisations, the private sector and social enterprise to promote Edinburgh to investors.
Council outcomes	CO7 - Edinburgh draws new investment in development and regeneration CO8 - Edinburgh's economy creates and sustains job opportunities CO9 - Edinburgh residents are able to access job opportunities
Single Outcome Agreement	SO1 - Edinburgh's economy delivers increased investment, jobs and opportunities for all
Appendices	None.