



Subject:	Eurocities Membership proposal
Date:	9 August 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development
Contact Officer:	Laura Leonard, International Relations Manager

<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"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek Members' approval for renewal of the council's membership of the Eurocities network, at a cost of €16,300 per calendar year.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Approve the renewal of Belfast City Council's membership of the Eurocities network, at a cost of €16,300 for one year.</li></ul>

3.0	<b>Key issues</b>
3.1	<p>Members will be aware that Belfast has been a member of the EUROCITIES network for almost 30 years. EUROCITIES is a network of more than 200 major European cities, across 38 countries. It is made up of the elected local and municipal governments of the major cities. The activity of the network is structured through a number of thematic working areas including Cultural Development, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Placemaking and Sustainability. Belfast has participated in a number of the groups, based on particular areas of need or interest to the council and the city at that time. We have also shared learning on a range of topics and has availed of the network to engage with the key EU institutions in order to influence policy.</p>
3.2	<p>Whilst the city has limited access to the transnational funds due to its withdrawal from the EU, this network is still nevertheless important in positioning the city and building strong networks to support shared learning and collaboration.</p>
3.3	<p>Within Belfast City Council, there are a number of areas in which officers have been engaged and which remain priority areas of focus. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing an innovative city – link to the Smart Belfast agenda and the work on the Innovation District</li> <li>• Transitioning to a net zero and greener economy – link to the work on resilience and climate change, with a focus on developing collaborative activity and accessing new research and insights</li> <li>• Internationalising Belfast’s cultural proposition – learning from FDI and city positioning work, particularly in post-Covid world</li> <li>• Cultural development and city animation – exploring the role of culture as a driver for city development – including both capital infrastructure and innovative programming.</li> </ul>
3.4	<p>Looking ahead to 2024, Belfast is to hold the annual meeting of the Eurocities Culture Forum in September that year. Our bid to hold the event recognises the value of Belfast as a cultural capital and will present another opportunity to position and promote the city during this year of cultural celebration. Belfast last hosted the Eurocities Culture Forum meeting in March 2014. During that event, more than 70 representatives from 58 cities attended to find out more about Belfast’s work in this space. It presented a great opportunity to shine a light on the city itself but also on the rich cultural and artistic talent that we have in this place.</p>

3.5	<p>Taking account of the planned event in 2024 and the wider learning and opportunities presented by our engagement in the Eurocities network, it is proposed that Belfast renews our annual membership of the network for this year.</p>
3.6	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>There are no direct Equality or Good Relations implications associated with these activities.</p>
3.7	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>The cost of annual membership is €16,300. This has been set aside within the International Relations budget for this year.</p>
4.0	<p><b>Appendices – Documents Attached</b></p>
4.1	<p>None</p>