



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	EU Unit Progress
Date:	11 February 2009
Reporting Officer:	Marie-Thérèse McGivern Director of Development ext. 3470
Contact Officer:	Laura Leonard European Manager ext 3577

Relevant Background Information

Members will be aware that the EU Unit brings regular progress reports to Members. The purpose of this report is to advise members of progress with respect to:

1. Interreg IVA funding
2. Eurocities membership
3. EU consultation by OFMDFM
4. Porto Youth Paper

Key Issues

1. Interreg IVA funding

Members will recall the report at the Development Committee meeting of 14 January 2009 highlighting seven projects successfully securing 100% funding for the Comet area through Interreg IVA funding.

Members were presented with a list of the seven projects, however the list had a wrongly named project funded through the tourism strand of Interreg. The successful project was not in fact 'Cultural Connections' as stated in the appendix but actually is the 'Cultural Tourism Network' led by An Droichead along with partners including;

Oideas Gael
Forbairt Feirste
Ulster Scots Agency
Killybegs Tourism College
Sabhal Mor Ostaig
Canan (Isle of Skye)

The project is currently under economic appraisal but is expected to receive £601,190 over three years.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the amended Interreg IVA funded projects for the Comet region. Appendix 1.

2. Eurocities Membership

Members will be aware that Belfast City Council has been an active member of the Eurocities network since the late 1990s. The Council through the European Unit is increasingly active in the network and involved in a range of activities as follows:

Economic Development Forum

- Member of the working group on Creative Clusters and partner in Lyon led research into successful clustering
- Member of the working group on EU Day of the Entrepreneur and held Belfast EU Day of the Entrepreneur on 19 November 2008 attended by 103 Belfast businesses.
- Member of the Eurocities Migrant working group feeding in the findings of the Open Cities project led by Belfast

Social Affairs Forum

- Member of the Social Inclusion working group and participating in forthcoming bid for activity for the 2010 EU Year of Anti Poverty and Social Inclusion
- Participating in the EU Commission policy work on how member states liaise with cities in the development of their national action plans on social inclusion and anti poverty.
- Project participation in the INTI – Cities project through the Good Relations unit looked at benchmarking good governance in relation to the integration of migrants.
- Participates in the Working Groups: Health and Well Being, Urban Security and Social Inclusion

Environment Forum

- Chair of the Clean Cities working group
- Hosted the waste management working group in 2008
- Member of the Noise Pollution, Air Quality, Climate Change, Environment, Green Areas and Health working groups
- Signatory to the Eurocities declaration on Climate Change

Culture Forum

- Participates in a transnational project with 22 other cities to celebrate 2008 as European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. The Belfast report on the visit to Berlin was deemed by the European Commission as best practice. The project's final conference is being held next month in Amsterdam
- Engaged in the Working Group: Culture and Young People

Additional Activity

As well as attending the various thematic Fora and engaging in policy debates and project development, Belfast City Council also attends the Annual General Meeting. This year on 26-29 November the meeting was held in the Hague. The Council led in three workshops on the themes of economic migration, supporting independent retail and murals. The murals removal project won a special project recognition at the annual Eurocities awards.

Potential new activity

The European Unit is currently exploring opportunities for the Council's IT department (ISB) through the Eurocities Knowledge Society Forum by way of identifying relevant policy, project and funding potential.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the level of the Council's activity in the Eurocities project network and to approve the annual council subscription fee for membership of the network at a maximum cost of €15,820

Resource Implications

1. €15,820 for the annual subscription fee for Eurocities membership

3. OFMDFM Proposal for a Committee/Sub Committee on Europe

Belfast City Council through the Chief Executive's Office was invited by the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister to respond to a consultation exercise in relation to the potential establishment of a Committee/Sub-Committee on Europe within the NI Assembly.

The proposed terms of reference for such a Committee are as follows;

- To review the Northern Ireland Assembly's role in relation to European issues and to make recommendations to improve scrutiny of EU policy and enhance engagement with EU issues
- To consider the Northern Ireland Executive's strategic approach to European issues, including in particular the Executive's response to the work of the Barroso Taskforce
- To consider European policy issues which fall within the remit of the OFMDFM

The Council through the European Unit made a quick response to the consultation due to the tight deadline related to the exercise. A copy of the response is attached as Appendix 2 of this report.

Following submission of the response document the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Development Committee along with the European Manager and Director of Development have been asked to present oral evidence of the Council's views on the issue on 18 February 2009 at 2.00pm. Both the Director and European Manager have also been invited to meet the two Junior Ministers on 9 February 2009 to provide them with an overview of the European work and priorities of Council and potential future collaboration with OFMDFM.

Recommendation:

Members are asked to approve the Council's response to the OFMDFM consultation on establishing an EU Committee/Sub-Committee within the NI Assembly and approve the attendance of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of Development, Director and European Manager or their nominees to give oral evidence at the NI Assembly on 18 February 2009.

4. Porto Youth Project

Belfast City Council was approached by the project lead, The City of Porto's Youth and Education Department, to engage in a transnational project regarding "Youth Policies in the Local Administration – Strategic Intervention Areas & Mechanisms for Young People's Participation at the Local Level" in the summer of 2008.

This initiative has been successful in obtaining European funding through the Youth in Action Programme and will facilitate partner organisations in France, Spain, Germany, the United Kingdom, Turkey, Bulgaria, Greece, Poland, Latvia, Finland, Norway and Romania to investigate how policies can be devised which are inclusive of young people and how resulting services can target them more effectively.

A conference will be held in Porto in April 2009 (exact date to be finalised) at which one elected member and one officer are entitled to attend. The funding will subsidise 70% of travel costs.

Recommendations:

Members are requested to approve the attendance of one Elected Member i.e. the Chairman or Deputy Chairman or one of the Political Parties' nominated Youth Champions and one appropriate officer from within Community Services.

Resource Implications:

30% of travel and subsistence costs (approximately £663) in relation to attendance at the Porto Youth Conference are included in the Community Services budget.

Documents Attached

Appendix 1 Interreg IVA project list

Appendix 2 Belfast City Council response to OFMDFM consultation

Key to Abbreviations

OFMDFM - Office of the First and Deputy First Minister