



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	European Unit Issues
Date:	6 December 2010
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that they receive regular EU unit updates with respect to the work of the EU unit. The following report outlines progress to date during the first eight months of the current financial year.

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>Members will recall that the objectives of the European unit are as follows;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Maximise EU funding2. Interpret, influence and disseminate EU policy3. Promote best practice in Europe4. Maximise participation in EU networks5. Raise awareness of EU affairs in the region <p>The following areas of activity have been delivered with respect to each of the above objectives.</p>
2.2	<p><u>Maximise European Funding</u></p> <p>Since the 1 April 2010, the EU unit has pursued the following EU funds;</p> <p>Interreg IVA</p> <p>Developed and submitted a second budget for the unit costs including staff and promotion of the Comet partnership and board costs. Amount: Total £303,805.59 Status: Awaiting decision by SEUPB</p>

	<p>Supporting the development of five bids for Interreg IVA funding under the enterprise call which closes 21 January 2011 Amount: TBC Status: Submissions due January 2011</p>
2.3	<p>Continued work with the Comet Interreg projects submitted in December 2007 Status: Bio-recorders conservation project received letter of offer but project promoter has rejected this as the organisation cannot absorb overhead costs. Status: Executive Leadership project led by UJJ rejected by SEUPB Steering Committee. Status: Carbon Footprint led by BCC rejected and rejected at appeal by SEUPB Steering Committee. Status: Three centre Incubation led by Belfast, North Down and Sligo Councils. Rejected by SEUPB Steering Committee. Status: QUB NI Technology Centre Project still within SEUPB system. Status: Cultural Tourism led by An Droichead being redirected to Interreg collaboration call April 2011. Status: Chamber capacity building led by NI Chamber of Commerce rejected and will be redeveloped for the April 2011 call. Status: Biodiversity bid submitted, led by all NI and border council biodiversity officers. Await SEUPB decision. Status: A business clustering project has been submitted and awaits SEUPB decision.</p>
2.4	<p><u>Grundtvig</u></p> <p>£60,000 secured to undertake a two way exchange between twelve retired seniors in the cities of Madrid and Belfast to engage in a six week volunteering programme.</p> <p>Opportunity Europe Belfast City Council's contribution of £15000, levered a further £50,000 from the EU Commission for a sixth annual opportunity Europe two day programme on St Georges Market 19-20 October which drew in 5000 post primary students and general public. Note: A detailed report will be made on the impact and value of this following an external evaluation which will be presented in the next Member's brief.</p>
2.5	<p><u>ESF</u></p> <p>Produced a council led ESF bid with the Economic Development unit to deliver a second Harte employment programme this time involving two of the other five Comet councils, Lisburn and Castlereagh. Funding decision by DEL awaited.</p> <p>Supported the implementation of the DEL led ESF "European Learning Network on Empowerment and Inclusion". This is 3 a year 495,000 euro project. Belfast City Council can benefit from this project by piloting tools that enable it to measure how attractive it is as a workplace for those who at some distance from employment and described as 'hard to reach'. HR staff are involved in this project.</p>
2.6	<p><u>Leonardo</u></p> <p>The EU Unit has secured one student for Building Control, worth approximately £10k.</p>

Note: Belfast City Council will make a bid for 2 – 3 more Leonardo placements in the February 2011 call.

2.7 Interreg IVB

Belfast City Council through ISB was invited to join a Dublin led Interreg IVB bid. After consideration a decision was made not to proceed as a partner. However, ISB can still benefit from the outcomes and learning resulting from the project.

2.8 Interreg IVB

Belfast City Council through the Property and Projects Department has been asked to engage with Manchester City on a project looking at attracting low carbon investment through a trans national framework. The purpose of this project is to design a new way of attracting private investment into energy saving technologies by developing a Procurement Model that will enable investors to get a significant rate of return.

This will be achieved by harnessing the purchasing power of a network of European cities to create a procurement framework that will enable cities to retrofit their public buildings with low carbon technologies more costly effective. This new and innovative partnership approach will increase the scale of the market of these technologies enabling the suppliers of these products and services to respond with the set of price signals that would increase investment decisions.

The model will also help cities to reduce its carbon emissions and to save millions of buildings energy bills as well as stimulating the local supply chain.

Cost and gain for Belfast City Council yet to be confirmed.

2.9 Integration Fund

Belfast City Council has had the opportunity to take part in a 625,000 euro 18 month project called “Healthy and Wealthy Together”. Through this project the health needs of migrants are being mapped and the capacity of professionals working with migrants is developed. The Council’s Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator sits on this group. By participating in this project the Council’s work relating to its corporate theme of health and wellbeing is accelerated.

2.10 Future calls

The EU unit is planning to host a COMT workshop in January 2010 to undertake a planning exercise around future EU funding. Over the summer months, the unit undertook a detailed scanning exercise to examine what remains in all EU programmes to 2013, how these may be relevant to Belfast City Council, when the calls are and what the match funding implications will be.

This information has equipped the EU unit to work with Chief Officers in the context of the new Corporate Plan, to plan EU funding applications from now to 2013.

In the meantime work is ongoing in a number of funding areas;

2.11	<p><u>Micro finance fund</u></p> <p>The European Union through a programme known as 'Progress' has set aside 100 million euros to support the unemployed, soon to be unemployed entrepreneurs, would be entrepreneurs, small businesses with less than 10 employees (micro) and the social economy.</p> <p>This 100 million euros has been enhanced to 500 million euros by the European Investment Fund and will be made available to the above stakeholders through intermediary funding bodies. These bodies can be banks or credit unions or organisations such as the Ulster Community Investment Fund or the Prince's Trust.</p> <p>A meeting was held in Stormont with the two Junior Ministers on 11 November 2010 and the EU Manager will be in a position to provide further information early in 2011 on the practicalities of accessing the loan funding. At this time, there will be more clarity on who will act as intermediaries for NI and how the loans can be accessed.</p>
2.12	<p><u>Interreg IVA</u></p> <p>In April 2011, the Special EU programmes Body will issue a call for collaboration projects. This is an opportunity for Belfast City Council and its stakeholders to apply for 100% funding to deliver cross border projects for local authority collaboration on social, economic or environmental issues.</p> <p>The EU unit will be holding a number of information workshops directly after Christmas to ensure that stakeholders are aware of and supported with respect to applying for this funding.</p>
2.13	<p><u>Seventh Framework Programme</u></p> <p>This is a 50 billion euro fund that provides support between industry and academia for research and innovation. Recently the EU Commissioner for research and innovation, Marie Geoghegan-Quinn, visited Belfast. Her aim was to promote the programme and the fact that NI has a poor track record in securing the funding. The local contact point for the programme is Invest NI.</p> <p>The EU unit is currently working with Invest NI, INI Brussels office and CBI to plan two information and support events in the new year, one for high growth companies and one for smaller SMEs. The EU unit is also following the Commission's development of the successor programme the Eighth Framework programme and will ensure that opportunities within it are relevant to Belfast and available to Belfast Stakeholders when the programme opens in 2012.</p>
2.14	<p><u>Open Cities</u></p> <p>Following a consultation meeting with key government departments on 19 November, the EU unit is working to develop funding bids to support the projects within the OPENCities local action plan. This project seeks to address barriers to the integration of economic migrants within Belfast. It is an Urbact II funded project involving the British Council and eight other EU cities. Belfast City Council's EU unit leads the project and has been working with key city stakeholders including migrants, employers and government bodies to identify and subsequently address the barriers to integration and to promote the positive aspects of economic migration.</p> <p>A detailed report will be presented to members in January 2011.</p>

2.15	<p><u>EU Public Health Call</u></p> <p>The EU unit is currently supporting the Belfast Health Development Agency and Belfast City Council to prepare a bid for the February 2011 EU Public Health Call. Further details will be provided as this develops.</p>
2.16	<p><u>Interpret, influence and disseminate EU policy</u></p> <p>On a daily basis, the EU unit examines the policies and legislation emanating from the EU Commission and EU Parliament that are relevant to Belfast City Council departments. Each of the EU officers provide a policy update on a regular basis to the respective department management teams that they support.</p> <p>This is an under promoted and undervalued aspect of the EU unit and in reality is critical for guiding Belfast City Council to be compliant with new EU law and in turn ensure Belfast City Council avoids any fines or negative attention.</p>
2.17	<p>An example of how important this work is the recent Buildings Directive, whereby the legislation was to enforce public authorities to energy certify buildings under 250 m2. This would have cost the Council a substantial amount of money to be compliant. The EU Unit lobbied the European Commission and this legislation was postponed from being ratified in the European Parliament.</p>
2.18	<p>A further example is where the EU unit helped a Belfast City Council working group set up to implement the new EU Services Directive. This meant that Belfast City Council had to have any external contracts and supplies opportunities available online compliant with EU law by December 2009. This is to ensure that any business across the EU could compete for BCC business. Failure to reach the December 2009 target would have led to hefty fines for Belfast City Council.</p>
2.19	<p>The EU unit held a policy information workshop in partnership with OFMDFM in the Ulster Hall on 19 October 2010. The purpose was to provide stakeholders with an overview of Europe's new Digital Agenda and the forthcoming opportunities and relevance to stakeholders of this new policy area. The unit invited Belfast City Council's ISB section and interested ICT companies and academia from across the Comet region. The unit will follow the policy area and hold further workshops as the agenda and funding opportunities emerge. It is anticipated that Belfast City Council will soon sign the Eurocities Green Digital Charter as our sign of commitment to the new EU Digital Agenda.</p>
2.20	<p>Belfast City Council signed the Eurocities Climate Change Declaration, committing the city council for the first time to climate change targets. On the back of this, council will hold the first ever climate change conference in Belfast on 10 March 2011. The EU unit will lead on this and has already secured world renowned speakers.</p>
2.21	<p>As members will be aware, since the November 2010 committee meeting, the EU unit is proactively developing a strong lobby with regard to EU funding for Belfast Post 2013. The unit is currently developing an evidence base to show good use of EU funding to date in Belfast and will push for a strong role for local authorities and a strong urban dimension to future EU funds in NI post 2013. Conversations around this have already begun with government departments here and the NI Assembly and a parallel process is well underway involving Belfast City Council through the Eurocities network.</p>

2.22	<u>Promote Best practice in Europe</u>
2.23	<p><u>HR project</u></p> <p>During this year, the EU unit provided Belfast City Council's HR department with an opportunity to engage in a two-way exchange study visit with the city of Lyon. This project sought to examine each of the city's gender equality approaches. Belfast City Council's approach was viewed as very innovative and as best practice and the detail will be promoted in a published booklet to be promoted across the EU at local government level.</p>
2.24	<p><u>Tourism</u></p> <p>In January 2010, the EU unit in partnership with the Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau held a Belfast Tourism showcase in Brussels. This was the first ever showcase held in the new NI Executive Bureau Office and attracted over 100 interested parties from business journalists to conference organisers and EU Institutions.</p>
2.25	<p><u>Eurocities AGM</u></p> <p>In November 2010, the EU unit profiled the work of the city on economic migrants at the 2010 AGM. The unit had a formal slot in the programme and generated interest from 15 other cities in Europe.</p>
2.26	<p><u>Development Department Away Day</u></p> <p>The unit profiled the purpose and work of the unit at the recent Belfast City Council Development Department away day in City Hall, held on 1 November 2010.</p>
2.27	<p><u>Brussels Open Days, October 2010</u></p> <p>Each year all the regional offices and institutions in Brussels engage in a week long programme known as Open Days. 2010 marked the eighth year and the EU unit had a three pronged role within the programme.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="295 1272 1361 1473">1. Through Quartiers en Crise, the Chair of Development spoke at a high level EU Parliament and Commission seminar held in the NI Office in Brussels. The Chair spoke on Belfast approaches to working at a neighbourhood level and gave examples of Belfast City Council's best practice in this field. The Chair also spoke at an informal public debating event on the evening previous to the seminar on the role of youth and leadership. <li data-bbox="295 1507 1361 1641">2. The EU unit facilitated an opportunity for the Chair of the Good Relations Partnership to speak at a seminar around diversity and integration in cities and promoted the work of the council's Good Relations Partnership, the Peace Plan and the Migrants Forum. <li data-bbox="295 1675 1361 1877">3. The EU unit delivered a seminar on behalf of all NI local government delegates at the Open Days. This event held in the NI Office in Brussels involved speakers from all the key Brussels departments providing an overview of policies and funding opportunities relevant to councils in NI and the border from regional policy to economic development, agriculture, the digital agenda and research and innovation. <li data-bbox="295 1910 1361 2101">4. The EU unit facilitated a meeting of all NI local authority delegates in Brussels with the MEPs North and South of Ireland. The purpose was to brief MEPs on obstacles in NI to EU funding and seek their support in lobbying to ease these. In addition, the purpose of the meeting was to begin the EU lobbying post 2013 for an enhanced role for local authorities and a continued Interreg programme. Belfast City Council and other players have

	<p>been invited back to Brussels in the new year when the MEPs will facilitate a direct lobbying meeting with the commissioner responsible for EU funding and regional policy, commissioner Johanne Hahn.</p> <p>This was followed by a promotional reception for the key players in Brussels. A full report and presentations are now available within the EU unit.</p>
2.28	<p><u>NI Executive Office official opening</u></p> <p>The EU unit along with the Lord Mayor and nominees of the Chair of Development and Deputy Chair will attend the official opening in Brussels on 9 December and will ensure that the work and priorities of council both now and in the future are communicated at EU level.</p> <p>The EU unit made several informal presentations to the NI Assembly this year and last year including the DFP Committee, DETI Committee, NI Assembly Committee and OFMDFM Committee.</p> <p>The purpose of each engagement was to promote the work and impact of the council's EU unit as the only dedicated local government resource on the island of Ireland.</p>
2.29	<p>At the request of Derry City Council the EU unit presented its work to Derry City Council, Derry Chamber and others and continues to advise the city of Derry on EU funding, policy and networking opportunities. Members should note that Derry City Council is currently in the process of establishing a European unit and of joining the Eurocities network as an associate member.</p> <p>Each year, the European units hosts inward study visits. These are requested by other municipal or national authorities and other stakeholders from throughout Europe. Interested players like to examine Belfast City Council's and others best practise in a number of areas ranging from community and youth, to brownfield development and regeneration, to conflict resolution and use of EU funding. To date the EU unit has facilitated nine inward study visits and attended all of the Lord Mayors civic/ambassadorial briefings.</p>
2.30	<p><u>Maximise participation in EU Networks</u></p>
2.31	<p><u>Quartiers En Crise</u></p> <p>Since 1989, Belfast City Council has been a member of the QEC network of cities working on integrated local urban development. As members will be aware, in a bid to rationalise networking activity and to concentrate on Eurocities engagement, the council withdrew from this network and resigned as Treasurer at the AGM in June 2010.</p> <p>Despite this, Belfast City Council and its local partners still had to honour 2010 work commitments within the network. To this end, the unit engaged in a high level EU policy discussion event during the Open Days programme in Brussels in October 2010 as detailed earlier.</p>
2.32	<p><u>Eurocities</u></p> <p>The EU unit engages at every level in this critical network. Each department within council is currently reviewing the value of engagement in 2010 and agreeing on the 2011 work plan. A detailed report will be presented to members in January 2011.</p>

2.33	<p><u>Belfast in Europe</u> The EU unit in September 2009 launched the Belfast in Europe network in the Waterfront Hall. This local stakeholders network has replaced Quartiers en Crise and involves the following players; NI Housing Executive, Belfast Area, Partnership Boards, Belfast Health Trust, Proteus, Healthy Cities, PSNI, DEL, OFMDFM and the Belfast Metropolitan College.</p> <p>The group has recently agreed a terms of reference and work plan and will meet bi-monthly to coordinate and promote EU work in Belfast and ensure that EU funding and information opportunities are widely communicated and embraced within the city region.</p>
2.34	<p><u>Comet Partnership</u> The unit continues to act as Secretariat to the six council Comet partnership. A recent review and agreed way forward has taken place and is detailed as a separate report to members this month.</p> <p>Members will also be aware of the unit's role in facilitating an official Comet Interreg launch and transnational conference held in City Hall on 10 November 2010 following a facilitated visit by the four local authorities of the Dublin region and the North South Ministerial Council. The purpose of this visit was to explore future potential collaboration along the Belfast to Dublin corridor.</p>
2.35	<p><u>Raise awareness of EU affairs in the region</u></p>
2.36	<p>This year to date, the EU unit has supported four small business EU information events, two city centre, one in west Belfast and one in North Belfast. The purpose of these was to provide current EU policy and funding information relevant to Belfast businesses. These annual events are delivered in partnership with the council's economic development and procurement units.</p>
2.36	<p>The unit facilitated a meeting with the Dublin Regional Authority, the DOE of NI and the NI Environment Agency. The purpose of this was to try to engage NI stakeholders in the coastal zone management work aspect of the Irish Sea Partnership that Belfast City Council signed up to in 2008. The ISR initiative will begin to take off in 2011 and members will be regularly updated.</p>
2.37	<p>The EU unit in partnership with the EU Commission Office in NI, OFMDFM and others held the seventh annual Opportunity Europe two day festival in St George's Market on 19-20 October 2010. Supported and attended by the two Junior Ministers, the event attracted every single post primary school in NI and delivered a re-vamped and exciting programme including one for senior citizens of Belfast. A detailed report with media coverage will be presented to members in January 2011.</p>
2.38	<p>This year the unit held an EU briefing session for the Belfast Metropolitan College and has engaged in an ongoing support service to encourage and assist the college in EU activity. The unit provides regular support to other stakeholders including Cinemagic, University of Ulster Jordanstown, NI Chamber of Commerce, Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau, NI Consuls Association, MLAs and NILGA.</p>
2.39	<p>The EU unit provides regular briefing and support to all the councils thematic work officers and the policy officers forum and on request to any council officers requiring help on EU matters on ongoing EU project delivery e.g. Urban Skatepark.</p>

3	Resource Implications
3.1	All costs relating to EU activities undertaken in the last eight months have been either agreed within the Development Department plan or agreed individually by the Development Committee.

4	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	All EU unit activity adheres to the council's equality and good relations considerations.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are asked to note the work of the European unit over the last eight months.

6	Decision Tracking
There is no decision tracking attached to this report	

7	Key to Abbreviations
<p>EU – European SEUPB – Special EU Programmes Body UUJ – University of Ulster Jordanstown QUB – Queens University Belfast NI – Northern Ireland ESF – EU Social Fund DEL – Department of Education and Learning OFMDFM – Office of the First and Deputy First Minister HR – Human Resources AGM – Annual General Meeting DFP – Department of Finance and Personnel DETI – Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment QEC – Quartiers En Crise PSNI – Policing Service of NI DOE – Department of the Environment INI – Invest NI CBI – Confederation of British Industry MLAs – Members of the Local Authority BVCB – Belfast Visitor and Convention Bureau NILGA – NI Local Government</p>	