



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Eurocities Update
Date:	15 February 2011
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	<p>Belfast City Council has been a member of the Eurocities network since the early 1990's. The network now consists of over 140 large European cities work is focused around the following fora:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Economic Development- Social Affairs- Culture- Mobility- Knowledge Society- Environment <p>The Secretariat for the network is based in Brussels with a staff and Executive Board of elected members from cities throughout Europe. Meetings are held three times a year in rotated venues around Europe and each forum has a maximum of eight working groups. An AGM is held each November and is attended by Belfast City Council's Chair and Deputy Chair of Development.</p> <p>Eurocities allows Belfast City Council to develop and strengthen its role in city leadership, reflecting the values and messages contained in the corporate plan. This platform has consistently opened avenues of policy development, funding and legislation dissemination, allowing Belfast a stronger voice both regionally and in Europe.</p>
1.2	<p>During 2010 Belfast City Council was active in the following fora:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><u>Economic Development Forum</u>Chair of Economic Migration working groupMember of creative clusters working groupMember of entrepreneurship working groupMember of employment working group

	<p><u>Social Affairs Forum</u> Member of social inclusion working group. Member of urban security working group Member of the health and well being working group.</p> <p><u>Environment Forum</u> Chair of the clean cities working group Member of the noise working group Member of the greening local economy working group Member of the waste working group</p> <p><u>Culture Forum</u> Member of the youth culture working group) Member of the resources for culture working group) virtual engagement</p> <p>During 2010 Belfast City Council also attended two meetings of the Knowledge Society Forum with an officer from ISB. The aim of this was to explore the potential for Belfast City Council to engage fully in the forum and pursue funding, project and best practice opportunities for Belfast.</p>
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2.	Key Issues
2.1	<p>Each year Belfast City Council experiences very positive gains from participation in the Eurocities network and importantly the council contributes to policy influencing at the EU Commission and Parliament levels and is currently engaging actively to ensure maximum EU funding for cities and an enhanced delivery role with respect to structural fund spend post 2013.</p> <p>The council also engages in European projects within the network and sources best practice that can be transferable to the city of Belfast. Critically the council works with other cities to track EU legislation and lobby heavily to influence this and ultimately create savings for the city eg EU Services Directive.</p> <p>Appendix 1 outlines the key work areas and outputs achieved through Belfast City Council's engagement in the network in 2010. It also outlines the intended work plans specifically for Belfast City Council in 2011. Each area has been discussed and deemed appropriate at relevant directorate levels within council departments. Highlights of the 2011 work plan may be summarised as follows:</p>
2.2	<p><u>Economic Development Forum</u> In 2011 Belfast City Council will participate in a study to identify best practice approaches at city and regional government level for supporting SMEs. This will lead to recommendations for changing policies and implementing more targeted programmes to help build SMEs and support entrepreneurs. Belfast City Council will also continue the high level lobby with Eurocities regarding EU funding post 2013.</p>
2.3	<p><u>Social Affairs Forum</u> The council will continue to engage in the follow up work to the 2010 year of combating poverty and social exclusion. It is anticipated that EU funding will become available to address this and potentially fund elements of the council's Anti Poverty Framework. Funding is anticipated from the newly established European anti poverty platform, set up under Europe's new strategy EU2020 to</p>

	<p>make Europe a more inclusive, sustainable and prosperous place by 2020. The city will also sign the Integrating Cities charter pledging our commitment to diversity.</p>
2.4	<p><u>Environment Forum</u> Belfast City Council will continue to engage as a pilot city in the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities. <u>The pilot will begin in March and finishes in September. 70 European cities have been chosen to partake in this pilot.</u></p> <p>- <u>Belfast City Council was chosen as a regional capital along with four other UK cities – Newcastle, Glasgow, Thanet District Council and Wokingham Borough Council.</u></p> <p>Belfast City Council will also host a high profile first ever climate change conference in Belfast on 10 March 2011. The Secretary General of Eurocities will speak at this along with renowned international and European speakers with a view to identifying and promoting practical climate change challenges for Belfast.</p>
2.5	<p><u>Knowledge Society Forum</u> Belfast City Council will engage actively for the first time in this forum. It will participate in the Open Data and Services Directive working groups while keeping a watching brief on the 4 other working groups of the forum. Through participation it will benefit from the knowledge and experience of others and identify potential funding and project opportunities.</p> <p>The Council will also move to sign the Green Digital Charter committing Belfast to promote carbon reduction through use of greener technologies.</p>
2.6	<p><u>Culture Forum</u> Belfast City Council will engage actively in this forum for the first time to contribute to the European policy process through participation in relevant consultations. A watching brief in relation to the development of cultural policy will be maintained and expertise will be shared. In particular, following extensive consultation in 2010 there will be presentation by the European Commission of new policy action aimed at supporting the cultural and creative industries.</p> <p>The Culture Forum will be used to work on <u>dealing with budget cuts (not only in the UK)</u> and will <u>exchange knowledge on how cities cope with the economic downturn, ie: working with the business sector, with volunteers and new partnerships.</u> It will also be used to identify best practice to assist in the delivery of the new Integrated Tourism Strategy and the development of the new Integrated Cultural Plan; and to identify funding opportunities due to open later in 2011, through the Culture Programme and any other funding calls.</p>
2.7	<p>Members should note that all Eurocities work engaged in by Belfast City Council staff is coordinated by the European unit. On a bi-monthly basis an officers meeting is held to track and appraise the level of activity and related outputs with respect to Eurocities participation, ensuring that all work is aligned to the council's corporate objectives.</p>
2.8	<p>Members should also note that Belfast City Council will have the opportunity to attend the 2011 Eurocities Annual General Meeting and submit priority council projects for the Eurocities awards under the categories of: Innovation, Participation and cooperation. The theme of the 2011 AGM will be "Social Dimension of Urban Planning". Belfast City Council will also run a photographic competition offering Belfast youth the opportunity to submit a photograph of Belfast which will be profiled in the Eurocities 25 year anniversary publication.</p>

2.9	Members are asked to note the contents of this report, approve the proposed 2011 Belfast City Council work plan with Eurocities and agree to the payment of the 2011/2012 subscription fee of 15,820 euros.
2.10	Members should note that due to austerity resources across Europe, the annual fee has been frozen for 2011/2012 and Eurocities will increase the level of virtual online working to reduce travel and to ensure as wide engagement of cities as possible.

3.	Resource Implications
3.1	The annual subscription fee for Belfast City Council's membership of Eurocities is 15,820 euros. The cost of Belfast City Council's engagement in Eurocities is covered within the Development Department's European Unit budget and through the relevant budgets of the participating departments.

4.	Equality and Good Relations Considerations
4.1	There are no equality and good relations considerations attached to this report.

5.	Recommendations
5.1	Members are asked to recommend: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Noting the Eurocities update report 2. Approval of the proposed 2011 Eurocities work plan for Belfast City Council 3. Approve payment of the 2011 Eurocities subscription at a cost of 15,820 euros

6.	Decision Tracking
<p>Following approval by Committee the European Unit will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commence work with relevant Council Departments on the implementation of the 2011 Eurocities Workplan 2. Pay the Eurocities subscription <p>Date line: April 2011 Reporting Officer: Laura Leonard</p>	

7.	Documents Attached
Key work areas and outputs – Appendix 1	