



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Eurocities Update
Date:	14 September 2011
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Laura Leonard, European Manager, ext 3577

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
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 and work is focused around the following fora:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Economic Development</li><li>- Social Affairs</li><li>- Culture</li><li>- Mobility</li><li>- Knowledge Society</li><li>- Environment</li></ul>
1.2	<p>The Secretariat for the network is based in Brussels with a staff of 22 and an 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 along with the Director of Development and the EU Manager.</p>
1.3	<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 opportunity and legislation dissemination, allowing Belfast a stronger voice both regionally and in Europe.</p>
1.4	<p>During 2011 Belfast City Council has been active in the following fora:</p>

1.5	<p><u>Economic Development Forum</u>  Belfast City Council attended the April Munich meeting focussed on lifelong learning approaches in cities and attended the following working groups. We are a member of the Urban Regeneration Working Group – this has led to interest by the Director of Property and Projects to engage in the new working group emerging around Integrated Local Urban Development in cities. BCC and DSD and NIHE also benefited from the research paper done by the group on a practitioners view on neighbourhood regeneration.</p>
1.6	<p>We are a member of the Metropolitan Area Governance Working Group where BCC has contributed its experience of leading the Comet Partnership. The research undertaken by this working group around models of Metropolitan Governance will be of interest and use to BCC as RPA re-emerges. It is also being used to enhance cities' lobby re: Post 2013 funding being directed to "functional urban areas and neighbourhoods".</p>
1.7	<p>We are also a member of the Creative Clusters Working Group – initial engagement by BCC to learn from other city strategies on Creative industries.</p>
1.8	<p>In anticipation of 2012, BCC is currently considering joining the upcoming Employment/Lifelong Learning Working Group.</p>
1.9	<p><u>Social Affairs Forum</u>  Belfast City Council attended the Spring Forum meeting in Grenoble in May which focussed on social innovation. Contact was made with the Head of the Commission's new Unit (Migration, Demography and Social Innovation) which will be useful for our lobbying work with regard to the National Reform Programme, in which BCC was active. This may help to increase the emphasis on social inclusion in future national Reform Programmes which typically tend to focus on economics.</p>
1.10	<p>Belfast City Council maintains a watching brief of the ESF taskforce and inputted in the Group's ESF Statement which is to be presented to the European Commission and Parliament. This encourages recognition to be given for cities roles in combating exclusion and encouraging employment. It recommends that the European Institutions explicitly mention cities in the regulations governing the future ESF for the 2013-2020 Programming period and introduce an obligation for Member States to be able to demonstrate that cities were involved in defining priorities and operational programmes.</p>
1.11	<p>Belfast is also represented via the South Belfast Roundtable on the Roma Inclusion taskforce. Attendance at these meetings is financed through the EU Progress Programme. Currently it is undertaking a peer review of how cities include Roma. Learning from this exercise will be fed back to Council's Good Relations Unit and the Interdepartmental Traveller Liaison Group. This group has also completed a EUROCITIES Statement on Roma inclusion.</p>
1.12	<p><u>Culture Forum</u>  Belfast City Council will re-engage in this Forum in the Autumn. The theme of this meeting is young people and heritage which is of interest to the Culture Arts and Tourism Unit. The work of this forum links with the role of this Unit in particular as it undertakes a review of its funding streams. Work is ongoing between the Culture Arts and Tourism and European Units in relation to the development of a 2012 Culture Programme bid. This Forum will be critical to securing partners.</p>

1.13	In the past the Council engaged in the Culture and Young People and Resources for Culture Working Groups. The Young People's Working group is of interest as it feeds into a number of Unit workplans across Council and has also enabled Council to access partners for the Youth In Action Programme which is still a feasible funding stream for Belfast City Council.
1.14	It is BCC's aspiration to invite the Culture Forum to Northern Ireland for a meeting in 2013 which would disseminate Belfast's good practice in promoting cultural and tourism activity in the city.
1.15	<u>Environment Forum</u> Chair of the Clean Cities working group - Belfast chairs the Clean Cities working group, leading the way in Europe on innovative ways of managing cleanliness within cities to include a reduction of cost to Councils and social marketing to change citizen behaviour.
1.16	Member of the Noise working group - Belfast remotely engages in this working group, however it is becoming more prevalent given the new noise levels for the City Airport and citizen concerns
1.17	Member of the Greening Local Economy working group - this working group is useful in for the bio economy consultation for the North Foreshore as well as the green industries work that BCC engages in.
1.18	Member of the Waste working group - BCC remotely engages in this working group. It is especially useful for interpreting EU directives, responding to policy and managing waste in Belfast.
1.19	Member of the Task Force on the 7 Environment Action Programme (7EAP) - BCC is one of four members on this group, responding on behalf of Eurocities on the development of the 7th EAP. This will be useful for future directives and targets for Belfast.
1.20	<u>Knowledge Society Forum (KSF)</u> Belfast City Council staff sit on 3 working groups of the KSF, these are Services Directive, Open Data, Smart Cities and we have a watching brief on the e-Inclusion group. We have attended 3 meetings so far this year and reports learning, links and contacts made at all meetings have been shared with colleagues and BCC stakeholder organisations.
1.21	Services Directive: We are contributing to a review of the Service Directive. The findings from this will inform a review to be carried out by the Commission later this year. Other EU cities are using the Services Directive as a means of achieving economic growth by simplifying processes involved in business start up. We are bringing learning from this back to Council and to our stakeholders.
1.22	Open Data: We are also benefiting from the work of the Open Data group and learning from the experience from different cities. ISB are now considering data sets suitable for open data publication and links have been made with DETI to support this work. Publication of open data is a means of making BCC information more transparent and easily available to the public. It can help to reduce the number of freedom of information requests received and information can be re-purposed to create new business opportunities. This work links with the new Digital Strategy that is being developed for the city.

1.23	Links with DETI have also enabled us to access information on pre-commercial procurement which we have shared with economic development and procurement.
1.24	Smart Cities: As members of the Smart Cities working group we have had the opportunity to learn from other cities and have passed this information to relevant staff within the Council who are involved in developing our own Smart City Strategy.
1.25	The KSF forum have asked if Belfast is interested in hosting a forum event in 2012. A report will be drafted to gain approval for this and a report will be brought to the Development and SP&R Committees before we respond formally to this request in October.
1.26	Information on 14 project opportunities has been shared so far this year with BCC colleagues and with Belfast in Europe members. The PSNI have been following up project opportunities and BCC will be involved in 2 projects which have been successful in being awarded funding. The first project Networking for Intelligent Cities (NICE), funded through the ICT Policy Support Programme begins in September. This funds technical expertise to help us improve our work in reducing ICT emissions. The second project ILLUMINATE funded by FP7 will allow us to refit the outside of the City Hall with energy efficient lighting. It is estimated that this project has the potential to reduce electricity usage in the City Hall by approximately £13,000 per annum.

<b>2.</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	Each year Belfast City Council experiences very positive gains from participation in the Eurocities network. 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.
2.2	The Council is using this lobbying experience to translate into a domestic lobby for 2011/12, to try and shape EU funding in NI post 2013 to have a strong urban dimension.
2.3	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 e.g. EU Services Directive.
2.4	Appendix 1 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.
2.5	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.

2.6	<p>Members should also note that Belfast City Council will have the opportunity to attend the 2011 Eurocities Annual General Meeting in Genoa from 2-5 November 2011. The theme of the 2011 AGM will be “Social Dimension of Urban Planning”</p> <p>Council has also has an annual opportunity to submit priority council projects for the Eurocities awards under the categories of: Innovation, Participation and cooperation. Following a council search for an appropriate project, the councils’ Economic Development Project “Titanic Quarter” supporting environmental businesses in Belfast was submitted under the awards. Council currently awaits the outcome of this submission.</p> <p>Belfast City Council also ran 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 and AGM exhibition</p>
2.7	<p>Members should note that due to austerity resources across Europe, the annual fee has been frozen for 2011/2012 and Eurocities has increased the level of virtual online working to reduce travel and to ensure as wide engagement of cities as possible in the network. Members should also note that Derry City Council has recently joined the Eurocities network as an Associate Member beginning with Membership of the Culture Forum and aiming in 2012 to join the Knowledge Society and Environment Forums. It is intended that Derry and Belfast City Council staff will work well together.</p>
2.8	<p>Members are asked to note the contents of this report and approve the attendance of the Chair and Deputy Chair of Development or their nominees at the Eurocities AGM along with the Director of Development and EU Manager or their nominees.</p>

<b>3.</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	The anticipated approximate cost overall for attendance at the AGM covering accommodation, flights and subsistence is £3840.
3.2	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.

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

<b>5.</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
5.1	<p>Members are asked to recommend:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Noting the Eurocities update report.</li> <li>2. Approval of the attendance of the Chair, Deputy Chair, Director of Development and EU Manager or nominees at the Eurocities AGM in Genoa at a maximum cost of £3840 overall.</li> <li>3. Approve payment of the 2011 Eurocities subscription at a cost of 15,820 euros.</li> </ol>

<b>6.</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
<p>Timeline: September 2011                      Reporting Officer: Laura Leonard</p>	

<b>7.</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
<p>Appendix 1- Key work areas 2011.</p>	

<b>8.</b>	<b>Abbreviations</b>
<p>DSD – Department for Social Development  NIHE – Northern Ireland Housing Executive  ESF – European Social Fund  DETI – Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment  KSF – Knowledge Society Forum</p>	