



<b>Report to:</b>	Development Committee
<b>Subject:</b>	European Unit Review and Recommendations
<b>Date:</b>	27 September 2011
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Laura Leonard, EU Manager, ext 3577

<b>1</b>	<b>Relevant Background Information</b>
1.1	Members will be aware that the European Unit was established within the Development Department in September 2003, following the production of a Business Case and Economic Appraisal agreed by Council. The Unit was the only dedicated EU resource in local government on the island of Ireland until June of this year, when Derry City Council took the decision to establish a similar unit which will be fully operative between October-December 2011. Donegal County Council now also has a small Unit within its Development Department.
1.2	BCC'S European Unit has a staff structure of one Manager and three core permanent staff and two time bound Units, one to secure Interreg cross border funding for the Greater Belfast area (on behalf of the six Comet Councils namely; Belfast, Lisburn, Castlereagh, Newtownabbey, North Down and Carrickfergus) and the OpenCities Unit will deliver the economic migrant project which is due to close Mid October 2011.
1.3	The Unit has existed to support all departments within BCC, to influence and disseminate relevant EU Policy and to maximise EU funding. The Unit provides a similar support to the five other Comet Councils through a Service Level Agreement and also provides hands-on advice and support to City Stakeholders including the business and academic and other public sector agencies. Much of this outreach work is directed through the Belfast in Europe group which is led and Chaired by BCC'S EU Unit.

<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	<b>Independent Review of the EU Unit</b> In February 2011, the Development Department appointed FGS McClure Watters in association with PMG - Consulting to review the Unit and to develop an evaluation framework to be used in the Unit over the next three years.

2.2	An overview of the findings of the review along with the ten recommendations, are highlighted in the Executive Summary attached as Appendix 1 of this Report.
2.3	In outlining the above findings and recommendations and following extensive consultation with internal and external Stakeholders, the Consultants acknowledged that the EU Unit has a strong reputation for delivery. This reputation is set out in a number of NI Consultation responses and in submissions made by Stakeholders to the NI Assembly Meetings on Europe and is mentioned in the OFMDFM Inquiry and Task Force on Europe as best practice.
2.4	<u>Unit Recommendations</u>
2.5	- That BCC continues to fund and support the EU Unit, in line with the opportunities identified.
2.6	- That the Unit makes accessing funding the top priority objective at least in the short term to support any gaps in funding within the Council. Other objectives should also be included such as influencing Policy across Europe and promoting Europe in Belfast, but these should be secondary
2.7	- With regard to funding; that consideration is given to the Environment, Development and Interreg monies available (as outlined in the EU funding Scan 2007-2013 under taken by the EU Unit). These are all real opportunities for the Council up to 2013 and have the potential of offering an impact on the quality of lives of those living in BCC.
2.8	- To date the Unit has been providing a service across all departments of the Council however, this does not link to the priority needs of the Council and/or the NI area. There is a need and opportunity for the BCC Members and Corporate Management Team to provide the EU Unit with clarity on the priority needs for the City and in turn for the Unit to provide feedback on the best opportunity for funding. The process needs to work both as a top down and bottom up approach to marking local and EU funding opportunities.
2.9	- The policy areas need to be worked on and need to be clearly defined by Council and the outcomes agreed at a political level and via the Corporate Management Team.
2.10	- The Unit has a number of systems in place at present which are appropriate to their current work. However with the focus moving to putting accessing funding as the top priority for the unit there will be a need for operational systems to be developed slightly further: The unit needs to have a pipeline approach to measuring the progress being made regarding sourcing EU funding against Council needs (N.B. – details of a pipeline template have been included in the evaluation for use in the Unit hereafter).
2.11	- That the staff within the Unit should be reorganised to focus only on those departments with priority projects.
2.12	- That management retain the right to move staff onto short term projects in pursuit of specific funding applications should it be needed, to ensure that the Council maximises its chance of winning the bid.
2.13	- That the Unit moves away from having two of the officers' salaries paid partially for by departments and instead, that all Unit salaries are paid for corporately so that resources can be utilised against the best opportunities, regardless of the department. The change in focus with these recommendations will mean a change in emphasis regarding the work area for the team. It is expected that they will review all areas it is involved in, such as providing information to Stakeholders and running awareness events and that they will spend 65-75% of their time in the

2.14	<p>pursuit of funding with the balance of time being invested in the agreed areas such as policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unit objectives and targets set through the Council Performance Management process should reflect a focus on accessing funding with SMART objectives being set in wherever possible. These should be set in line with the logical framework which the unit is now using and has been developed as part of this review.</li> </ul>
2.15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- That the Unit will have a strategy of focusing on bringing in funding and will ensure that a minimum of 65% of their time is more or less spent on accessing funding.</li> </ul>
2.16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- That the team sets up a process that all funding opportunity need to go through in order to ensure that only those likely to have the best chance of winning and that fit corporate priority are provided with resource. Also it is recommended that a monitoring system is set up to monitor the opportunities as they move through the different stages.</li> </ul>
2.17	<p>As part of the external review of the EU Unit, a logical evaluation framework was developed in collaboration with the European Officers. This framework closely challenged and reviewed the Unit objectives and set out agreed refined objectives and tools for regularly monitoring and challenging the output and impact of the Unit's work</p> <p>The reviewed and agreed new EU Unit vision and objectives are now as follows;</p>
2.18	<p><u>Impact of Unit</u>To secure European finance, insight and relationships, that enables BCC to enhance citizen's quality of life, i.e.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To maximise EU Funding</li> <li>- To interpret, influence and disseminate EU Policy</li> <li>- To maximise participation in EU networks</li> <li>- To promoting Belfast in Europe</li> <li>- To Raise awareness of EU affairs in the region</li> </ul>
2.19	<p>A third and final output from the evaluation of the Unit was a review of the Belfast in Europe Platform. It recommended That Belfast in Europe – the current EU Stakeholder group coordinated by the unit – develops to become a greater asset for Council by taking on a more strategic role as the Northern Ireland European Regional Forum.</p>
2.20	<p>It is recommended the Forum has a key liaison role with the European Commission Task Force, the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister, the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels and European Commission office in Belfast to enrich and support its work. Contacts and networks such as EuroCities to influence EU policy development.</p>
2.21	<p>To ensure the Forum operates at a more strategic level, new organisations will be asked to join and existing organisations have been asked to review their representation. Forum members need to be decision makers within their organisations who can authorise action. They will be required to meet four times a year to plan the work of the Forum. We ask that the Director of Development write to appropriate organisations to invite appropriate representation on the Forum to ensure its strategic direction and impact.</p>

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	There is no cost to Council to implement the review findings.
3.2	Implementation of the Unit recommendations will mean <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased EU funding leverage for BCC</li> <li>- Fundamental changes to how EU Unit Staff salaries are paid i.e. at a corporate level as opposed to departmental percentage.</li> </ul>

<b>4</b>	<b>Equality and Good Relations Considerations</b>
4.1	There is no Equality and Good Relations Considerations attached to this Report.

<b>5</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
	Members are asked to approve the following recommendations; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To consider and note the content of the EU Unit and Belfast in Europe reviews.</li> <li>- To agree to the recommendations within the report.</li> <li>- To agree to adopt the new logical evaluation framework structure for monitoring the impact of the EU Unit.</li> <li>- To agree that the EU Unit undertakes an annual programme of work agreed by the Corporate Management Team and Committee's relevant to meeting corporate priorities.</li> <li>- To agree that the EU Unit will rename the Belfast in Europe as the NI European Regional Forum, continue to chair it, provide the secretariat and manage the budget, and seek reviewed membership at decision making levels within the member organisations.</li> </ul>

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
Take to Development Committee and Council.	
Time line: 27 September 2011	Reporting Officer: John McGrillen

<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
BCC - Belfast City Council EU - European Unit BIE - Belfast in Europe	

<b>8</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
Appendix 1 - Summary of EU Review	