



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Eurocities Update
Date:	6 March 2011
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
Contact Officer:	Laura Leonard, European Manager, ext 3577

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 2011 Belfast City Council was active in the following fora:</p> <p><u>Economic Development Forum</u></p> <p>Member of cohesion policy working group</p> <p>Member of urban regeneration working group</p> <p>Member of metropolitan areas working group</p>

	<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><u>Knowledge Society Forum</u> Member of the Open Data Working Group Member of Smart Cities Working Group Member of E Inclusion Working Group Member of Services Directive Working Group</p>
--	---

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 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 2011. It also outlines the intended work plans specifically for Belfast City Council in 2012. Each area has been discussed and deemed appropriate at relevant directorate levels within council departments.</p> <p>Highlights of the 2012 work plan may be summarised as follows:</p>
2.2	<p><u>Economic Development Forum</u> In 2012 Belfast City Council will continue the high level lobby with Eurocities regarding EU funding post 2013. This work will be critical to influence and guide intensive work planned for 2012 to lobby Whitehall, the Northern Ireland Assembly and government departments to maximise the role of local government post 2013 and to secure a strong urban European plan for Belfast. BCC will engage in the Integrated Urban Development, Cohesion Policy and Metropolitan Areas Working Groups.</p>

2.3	<p><u>Social Affairs Forum</u> Belfast City Council will continue to contribute to the EU policy process in the following ways by strengthening the relationships with DG Employment through maximising the links between member cities and key officials in DG Employment and responding to the encouragement of DG Employment to show how cities can bring together researchers and practitioners to pilot new initiatives and test methods of evaluation.</p> <p>BCC will develop closer links with EU institutions and stakeholders on the European Year for Active Ageing.</p> <p>Continue to work on influencing the final shape of the future ESF regulations. Identify early, and take advantage of funding calls which could facilitate joint city working on projects which support the aims and objectives of SAF e.g. calls under the PROGRESS and FP7 Social Science and Humanities Programmes.</p>
2.4	<p><u>Environment Forum</u> Belfast City Council will continue to engage in the Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities. The launch of the full framework will be in Aalborg in May .</p> <p>BCC will engage in the S Cube project, 100% funding project designing city energy plans. We hope to hear if it is successful in March 2012.</p> <p>BCC will continue to work to address the challenges associated with global climate change, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions and anticipating the potential consequences and developing effective adaptation measures.</p> <p>We will provide input to the review of EU air quality policy, in particular with regards to the specific needs of cities</p> <p>BCC is a selected city in the 7 European Environmental Action Programme and will follow-up to the European Union's Sixth Environmental Action Programme (with the likely development of a 7th Environmental Action Programme), including the development of strategies on urban environment, including issues such as urban transport, reduction of toxic substances in the environment, air quality, and the prevention and recycling of waste</p> <p>BCC will promote the use of sustainable energy in cities (raising awareness and energy efficiency, while decreasing the production of CO2) and promote and foster green growth as economic engine for city development</p>
2.5	<p><u>Knowledge Society Forum</u></p> <p>In 2012 the final report of the road map for Smart Cities will be produced by the working group. This draws together learning from other EU cities leading in this area. The report will provide valuable insights and learning for Belfast and other cities who have yet to develop a smart city strategy. Future opportunities for funding will also be explored.</p> <p>BCC will engage in the e-inclusion working group. BCC will produce a guide book with the Open Data Working Group to provide technical and legal guidance on the publication of data sets.</p>

<p>2.6</p> <p>2.7</p> <p>2.8</p> <p>2.9</p> <p>2.10</p>	<p><u>Culture Forum</u></p> <p>BCC will continue its contribution to the European policy process through participation in relevant consultations.</p> <p>BCC will use the Culture Forum to identify best practice and benchmarking to assist in the delivery of the Council's Integrated Tourism Strategy. The areas to be included in learning, benchmarking and sharing knowledge include cultural infrastructure, use of new technology, heritage issues, development of Belfast Story, maximising Titanic and maritime heritage particularly for 2012, extending benefits of tourism across the city.</p> <p>BCC will use the Forum to identify funding opportunities to support corporate plan objectives and in particular tourism, culture and arts.</p> <p><u>Additional Activity</u></p> <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> <p>Members should also note that Belfast City Council attended the 2011 Eurocities Annual General Meeting and submitted priority council projects for the Eurocities awards under the categories of: Innovation, Participation and cooperation. The theme of the 2011 AGM was "Social Dimension of Urban Planning". Belfast City Council ran a photographic competition offering Belfast youth the opportunity to submit a photograph of Belfast which was profiled in the Eurocities 25 year anniversary publication. Unfortunately we were unsuccessful in securing an award. The conference looked at the challenges of cities addressing issues of aging populations, integrating young, new communities and creating sustainable connected cities. The AGM was attended by Councillor Bob Stoker and Councillor Caoimhin Mac Giolla Mhin on behalf of the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Development Committee. One of the key messages was that more EU resources need to be dedicated to urban issues given that more than 70% of Europe's population resides in urban areas yet 50% of the EU budget is dedicated to rural issues. BCC via the EU Unit is planning to lobby the NI Government with regard to this.</p> <p>Members are asked to note the contents of this report, approve the proposed 2012 Belfast City Council work plan with Eurocities and agree to the payment of the 2012/2013 subscription fee of 15,820 euros.</p> <p>Members should note that due to austerity resources across Europe, the annual fee has been frozen for 2012/2013 and Eurocities will increase the level of virtual online working to reduce travel and to ensure as wide engagement of cities as possible.</p>
---	--

3.	Resource Implications
3.1	<p>The annual subscription fee for Belfast City Council's membership of Eurocities is 15,820 euros.</p> <p>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.</p>

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

5.	Recommendations
5.1	<p>Members are asked to recommend:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Noting the Eurocities update report 2. Approval of the proposed 2012 Eurocities work plan for Belfast City Council 3. Approve payment of the 2012 Eurocities subscription at a cost of 15,820 euros

6.	Decision Tracking
<p>Following approval by Committee the European Unit will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commence work with relevant Council Departments on the implementation of the 2012 Eurocities Workplan 2. Pay the Eurocities subscription <p>Date line: April 2012 Reporting Officer: Laura Leonard</p>	

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