Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Eurocities Knowledge Society Forum Summer Conference
Date:	16th October, 2012
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	In October 2011 Development Committee gave approval for Belfast City Council to host the Eurocities' Knowledge Society Forum's summer conference in the city. The purpose of the event was to: - promote Belfast as a 'trailblazer in technological excellence' – a dynamic and vibrant city which provides a base for leading edge high tech companies - raise the profile of our innovative ICT/Digital and Creative Industries sectors - bring immediate economic benefits by attracting delegates (many for the first time) to Belfast - build relationships to learn from and to share learning with others - raise the profile of our Council and our city stakeholders as credible partners for future EU funding bids

2	Key Issues
2.1	The conference was held over two days on June 20th and 21st and was a huge success exceeding all of the above objectives. Over the two days almost 100 delegates learned how cyber security is transforming our city, enabling it to attract companies such as the New York Stock Exchange, Fidessa and CITI and compete economically with others across the world.
2.2	Around half of the total delegates came from other European countries such as Spain, Austria, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Estonia and the UK. As well as hearing from local experts delegates had the opportunity to visit local companies to learn how they are creating new economic opportunities by building on technological investments made in our city. Company visits included the NI Science Park, University of Ulster, CITI, BT NI and Eircom NI headquarters.

2.3	The conference was opened at City Hall by the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor Gavin Robinson and included talks from Dr Norman Apsley from the Northern Ireland Science Park, Dr Sinclair Stockman from Digital NI 2020, Jim Gamble from Ineque, Dr John McCanny from ECIT, Ingrid Goetzl from the Eurocities Knowledge Society Forum and Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster.
2.4	For many delegates this was their first visit to Belfast and their feedback has been extremely positive. They learned so much about our city and are now aware who to connect with to collaborate on future projects. Delegates have also praised the smooth running and organisation of the event and the information provided beforehand enticed many of them to extend their stay.
2.5	As the Eurocities' Knowledge Society Forum's summer conference was being held in the city, the Eurocities' network requested support to hold a side event for European cities who were partners in NICE, a Framework 7 funded project. This attracted a further 20 people to Belfast and many stayed to take part in the cyber security conference.
2.6	Feedback from local delegates who took part in the event was equally positive. It provided opportunities for them to learn how investment in technology has rendered the geographic location irrelevant for many local companies as powerful cross Atlantic connections and connections to Europe and Britain are creating new business opportunities. They also benefited by forging links with other organisations across Europe.
2.7	Comments from local delegates highlighted the need for more events of this kind to inform and support local organisations and to help build capacity to take advantage of their Northern Ireland location. Delegates' comments have been incorporated into a full report which details their impressions of progress already made by our city and how as a city we can continue to improve.
2.8	Links have been made between our key speakers and many other European cities since the conference. ISB are also following up on contacts and relationships have been strengthened with our local universities and companies to collaborate on current and future projects and to enhance our understanding of accessing European funding.
2.9	Press coverage about the event also helped to convey the message that Belfast is at the forefront of technological advancement, innovation and change which is supported by an impressive telecoms and cyber security infrastructure. Information about the event was publicised in (appendix 2): - The Irish Times - North West Telegraph - The Belfast Telegraph - The Newsletter - The Irish News - The Andersonstown News
2.10	Interviews were broadcast on the local evening news for both BBC and UTV and a video of the event has been uploaded onto Youtube and can be viewed at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMnfxZeq9sk&feature=youtu.be

2.11	Information about the event was also publicised on the following websites: http://www.4ni.co.uk/northern_irelandnews.asp?id=146159 http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/business/business-news/citys-cyber-power-to-be-promoted-at-eu-forum-16174722.html http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/news/news.asp?id=3073 http://www.eventbrite.com/event/3652071444 http://www.smart-ip.eu/2012/06/eurocities-knowledge-society-forum-belfast/

3	Resource Implications
3.1	Development Committee had given approval for the conference to be resourced with funding from both the Economic Initiatives and European Unit at a total cost of £3,500. ISB made a similar contribution from their budget.

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

5	Recommendation
5.1	It is recommended that Committee notes the positive feedback from this event. It has put Belfast on the map and strengthened links to create future opportunities for collaboration and to access European funding.

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

7	Key to Abbreviations
KSF	Knowledge Society Forum

8	Appendices
	Appendix 1 – Press Coverage