



Belfast City Council

Report to: Development Committee

Subject: Hosting EUROCITIES Social Affairs Forum: Autumn 2013

Date: 23 April 2013

Reporting Officer: Mr John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470

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1 Relevant Background Information	
1.1	To inform Members of the opportunity for Belfast to host the Autumn 2013 meeting of the EUROCITIES Social Affairs Forum (SAF).
1.2	Members will be aware that Belfast City Council hosted the summer 2012 EUROCITIES Knowledge Society Forum and that this had positive impact for Belfast: both in terms of profiling the city across Europe and also highlighting what local businesses were doing in terms of cyber security. Therefore the prospect of hosting a EUROCITIES Social Affairs meeting in 2013 presents a similar opportunity to showcase the work Belfast has done in promoting social cohesion and innovation.

2 Key Issues	
2.1	The Community Services Unit, supported through the European Unit, has been engaged in the EUROCITIES Social Affairs Forum since 2004. Some outcomes for the Council and the city have been: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Participation by Alderman Bob Stoker on a political panel at the Spring 2013 meeting relating to Neighbourhood approaches to promoting social inclusion;- Participation in work to commemorate the European Year of Social Inclusion and Combating Poverty, which helped to inform the Council's Poverty Framework;- Presentation of Belfast best practice e.g. in March 2012 it provided an overview of the work carried out by the Belfast Health Development Unit on encouraging and facilitating older volunteers;- Engagement in an Urbact network centred on Youth Participation;- Participation in the MIXCITIES and DIVERCITIES projects via The Good Relations Unit;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Through the involvement of the South Belfast Roundtable on Racism the city is also spearheading work with the major European Institutions on the integration of the Roma community. This Taskforce is also preparing a project in response to a current EU call for applications.
2.2	<p>The themes for the 2013 Social Affairs activity are aligned to the Europe 2020 Strategy and are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusion & employment of young people - Tackling deep seated poverty & worklessness - Social cohesion in an age of austerity
2.3	<p>It should also be borne in mind that 2013 is the European Year of the Citizen and there will be widespread focus across the Member States on how citizens are involved and connected to initiatives linked to these above themes.</p>
2.4	<p>SAF meetings are typically of 2 day's duration. Day One is attributed to a relevant theme to the EUROCITIES work plan and will include a local speaker. The Programme usually also includes speed networking sessions, site visits and discussion on the network's operational matters and updates on European projects.</p>
2.5	<p>Should the Forum's Working Group chairs decide to meet in advance of the Forum meeting proper, the host city is expected to facilitate this.</p>
2.6	<p>It is common practice that the host city provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting venue for Forum and Working Group meetings - All catering associated with Forum and Working Group meetings - An evening's civic dinner for all guests and participants
2.7	<p>Attendees pay their own accommodation and travel expenses.</p>
2.8	<p>Upon initial consideration of the European and EUROCITIES agendas, it is proposed that a Belfast Social Affairs meeting could focus on Social Innovation. Given the progressive and innovative work the Council has undertaken through the Investment Programme, BCIP and Local Investment Fund, hosting the Social Affairs Forum in autumn 2013 would present an opportunity to showcase Council's collaborative working, investment in local communities and measures undertaken to prepare for the Local Government Reform. The involvement of politicians in Area Working Groups can also be considered best practice. Officers consider that the above outline would provide considerable learning opportunities for their European colleagues.</p>
2.9	<p>Upon Committee agreement a working group will be established which will develop the conference programme. Provisional dates for the 60-80 Forum members to come to Belfast are 17 and 18 October 2013.</p>

3	Resource Implications
3.1	In terms of financial resources, both the Community Services and EU Unit will set aside £3,000 from their existing budgets to meet costs associated with the Forum meeting. This is based on similar expenditure associated with the KSF meeting.
3.2	A project steering group will plan and implement the conference programme.

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 requested to note the contents of the report and agree to host the Autumn 2013 SAF.

6	Decision Tracking
Timeline:	October 2013
Reporting Officers:	
	John McGrillen, Director of Development Cate Taggart, Community Development Manager

7	Key to Abbreviations
SAF-	Social Affairs Forum
KSF-	Knowledge Society Forum