



**Report to:** Development Committee

**Subject:** Joint Bid to host EUROCITIES Culture Forum 2014

**Date:** 21 May 2013

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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will be aware that Council is engaged in a number of EUROCITIES fora and that this has provided the organisation with a range of tangible outputs- the recent installation of energy efficient lighting in the City Hall being one.
1.2	<p>In terms of the Culture Forum, engagement has led to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participation in work to commemorate the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, which helped to inform the Council's Cultural Framework and development of the city's Festivals Forum;</li> <li>- Submission of a project proposal in 2012 as partner in the CityBooks application to the EU Culture Programme;</li> <li>- Presentation of Belfast best practice- including presentation at the closing conference of the Intercultural Dialogue project in Amsterdam;</li> <li>- Participation in the Creative Industries (through the Economic Development Unit), Culture and Young People and Resources for Culture working groups: which have permitted exchange of experience and promotion of Belfast;</li> <li>- Contribution into European surveys and policy papers- ensuring European legislation takes into account cities' needs and experience</li> <li>- Profiling of the Apps for Literary Belfast and Belfast Music product at the Spring 2013 meeting in Florence</li> </ul> <p>This is also evidence of how Belfast is viewed as a valued member of the Forum.</p>
1.3	As a region of Europe, we are now at an important stage in the calendar for the emerging EU Budget and priorities for the period 2014-2020. Continued and proactive engagement in the Eurocities network is crucial for Council in order to position itself to maximise the opportunities that this new round of funding will bring. This is also imperative activity in order to deliver the Investment Plan objective of securing European funding.

1.4	Belfast City Council now has the opportunity to bid to host the Eurocities Culture Forum (CAF), one of the bigger fora in the network, with many members being previous European Capital of Culture. Hosting CAF is a very competitive process but provides an excellent opportunity to showcase the city's cultural product as well as demonstrating how innovative it is in tackling key issues affecting the sector. Derry City Council is keen to partner Belfast in this bid, which will permit Belfast to achieve the above objectives in a more economic manner.
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<b>2</b>	<b>Key Issues</b>
2.1	A dual city bid to the Culture Forum has never been attempted before but preliminary discussions with EUROCITIES staff indicated that this would be enticing to its members. This would build on Belfast's capital city status and reputation within the forum and also the position of Derry-Londonderry as the first UK Capital of Culture. A successful bid would bring somewhere in the region of 80-100 attendees and past experience of acting as host city has led to significant press coverage as well as exposure of indigenous industry to representatives of over 70 European cities.
2.2	CAF meetings typically last 3 days- the host city determines a theme which is the focus of the first day, working group meetings and site visits as well as the normal business meeting make up the rest of the programme. With meetings starting on the Wednesday, cultural activity is offered on the Saturday. This format would allow Belfast to host Wednesday and Thursday with Derry/Londonderry accommodating the Forum Friday and Saturday.
2.3	The development of the bid will take place over the coming weeks and will include detail on the infrastructure to enable the participants to get to and stay in Belfast, conferencing facilities as well as information on cultural and tourism products.
2.4	Preliminary discussions with officers in Derry City Council have led to the tentative theme of the bid being "Culture: Connecting Cities"- the rationale behind why participants attend the Forum in the first instance but also because during this event they will be connected to 2 of Northern Ireland's cities. The finer detail of the work programme will only be developed once the bid result is known.

<b>3</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
3.1	Both Councils have proposed an individual budget of £5,000 to host the Culture Forum, should the bid be successful. This will offset catering, venue hire, any entertainment costs, expenditure associated with site visits and speaker fees (if applicable) and the transfer between the two cities.
3.2	Should the bid be successful a project steering group will be set up to include officials from both Councils as well as representatives of the Culture and Arts sector.

<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 requested to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Note the contents of this report and to agree to the submission of a joint bid to host a EUROCITIES Culture Forum meeting in 2014.</li> <li>- Agree to a Belfast City Council budget of £5,000 which will come from the 2014-2015 general Tourism, Culture and Arts budget.</li> </ul>

<b>6</b>	<b>Decision Tracking</b>
There is no decision tracking attached to this report.	

<b>7</b>	<b>Key to Abbreviations</b>
CAF- Culture Forum	