



Belfast City Council

Report to: Development Committee

Subject: Update on Members EU Working Group

Date: 20 June 2013

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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Members will recall a discussion at the Development Committee meeting on 12 June 2012, around the role of Belfast City Council (BCC) and, in particular, the elected Members in relation to Eurocities and future EU engagement. At this meeting, the Members agreed to the establishment of a Members EU Working Group.
1.2	<p>Members agreed at this time for the need for BCC to play a greater role at elected Member level in European affairs, both at city and at the wider EU level. Up to this point, EU engagement was the role of the Chair and Deputy Chair of Development or their nominees and included participation in the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Attendance and input into the annual Europe Day event held by the EU Commission in Belfast, on 9 May each year. – Attendance and input into the annual BCC/EU Commission celebrations in Belfast to mark the EU Day of Languages on 26 September each year. – Attendance and input at the annual BCC/EU Commission/OFMDFM event held in St Georges Market over the two day Opportunity Europe Festival, to promote working, studying, volunteering and language learning in Europe. – Attendance and panel engagement at the annual Eurocities meeting held in November each year, in host European cities. – Attendance and input into any other local or Brussels events hosted by BCC, such as Eurocities fora, e.g. Knowledge Society Forum hosted in Belfast in June 2012 and Brussels Open Days Seminar held annually in Brussels in October each year.
1.3	Since the establishment of the Members EU Working Group, the group have met on two occasions, 13 December 2012 and 28 February 2013. Meetings are scheduled quarterly for the remainder of the year, as follows: 27 June @ 3pm; 29 August @ 3pm and 28 November @ 3pm
1.4	To date, Members have received overviews on key EU policy issues relevant to BCC and an overview of the activity areas for Council within the Eurocities network. In particular, Members have been very interested in the ongoing lobby work of Council through the EU Unit, with respect to the future NI EU Programmes, namely ERDF, ESF, INTERREG and PEACE, with the aim of having an enhanced and strategic role for Council during the next EU programme period 2014-2020.

1.5	During this period, Councillor Bob Stoker, Member of the EU Working Group, represented BCC at the May 2013 Eurocities Social Affairs Forum meeting in Katowice, Poland. The theme of the meeting was Neighbourhood Approaches to promoting Social Inclusion and Councillor Stoker shared Belfast experiences in respect to local integration and practices to bring about outcome based change to meet community needs.
1.6	Unconnected to the work of the Working Group but relevant to Council's work in Europe, Councillor Pat McCarthy represented BCC on a visit to the Wilhelmsburg area of Hamburg in May 2013 to engage in the EU Cascade Project. The study visit focussed on renewable energy powered district heating, pioneering low carbon building design, and the transformation of a former landfill site to a renewable energy hub. During this visit the Council also had the opportunity to meet and network with an international gathering of the Cleantech business cluster.

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>As Members have become more familiar with current EU priorities and relevance to BCC, a number of opportunities have been identified to try to profile BCC and to further engage on the European stage. These are summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Attendance at a politician's event on Urban Innovative Solutions for Businesses on 7 October 2013 in Brussels. This event is for Councillors leading on city economic development to allow politicians from a range of EU cities along with the EU Commission to discuss innovative solutions to attract and support businesses. – Attendance at the annual Open Days programme in Brussels from 7 to 10 October 2013. During this annual programme of policy and funding seminars across a range of EU issues, BCC's EU Unit organises a seminar for NI local government in the NI Office in Brussels. The 2013 seminar will take place on 8 October and will focus on the opportunities for NI and in particular the local government sector with regard to the new EU programmes 2014 – 2020. – Attendance at the BCC hosted Eurocities Social Affairs Forum from 17 – 18 October 2013. – Attendance at the Eurocities AGM in Ghent, Belgium from 27 – 30 November 2013 on the theme of Smart Citizens.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	Travel and subsistence cost for Members attendance at the above events is available within the current EU Unit Eurocities budget

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 will recall that approval has already been given on 12 June 2012 for BCC representation at the Eurocities AGM and Brussels Open Days.</p> <p>Members are therefore asked to more specifically agree that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – One Member of the working Group attends the Eurocities economic development event in Brussels on 7 October 2013, followed by the BCC EU seminar on 8 October 2013. – One Member of the working Group attends the Eurocities AGM in Ghent from 27 – 30 November 2013.

6	Decision Tracking
<div>Timeline: August 2013</div> <div>Reporting Officer: Laura Leonard</div>	

