



Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Eurocities Engagement Approval 2014/2015
Date:	18 March 2014
Reporting Officer:	John McGrillen, Director of Development, ext 3470
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	<p>Members will be aware that Belfast City Council (BCC) has been a member of the Eurocities Network since the early 1990's. This network brings together over 140 of Europe's largest local authorities at Officer and Member level. The secretariat for the network is based in Brussels with a staff and Executive Board of elected Members from cities throughout Europe. Through relevant Council Officer engagement, BCC has participated regularly in the following thematic fora around which, Eurocities is structured:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Social Affairs- Economic Development- Environment- Culture- Knowledge Society
1.2	<p>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 BCC's Chair and Deputy Chair of Development. Each year BCC, like all members of Eurocities are asked to pay a membership fee of €15,820. This fee has been frozen at €15,820 since 2009, and continues at this rate again for 2014.</p>
1.3	<p>Each year BCC experiences very positive gains from participation in the Eurocities network and importantly the Council contributes to policy influencing at the EU Commission and Parliament levels. This platform has consistently opened avenues of policy development, funding opportunity and legislation dissemination, allowing Belfast a strong voice both regionally and in Europe. Officers are currently heavily engaged in</p>

	<p>looking at funding opportunities for BCC through the many competitive EU funds now opening for the new programme period 2014-2020. The EU Unit has worked consistently over the last 2 years to lobby to ensure a maximum level of EU funding is directed to cities and an enhanced delivery role is secured for Local Government with respect to the EU Structural Funds spend. The EU Unit reflects this lobby at Regional Government here in Northern Ireland.</p>
1.4	<p>The Council engages in EU projects within the Eurocities network and continues this year to deliver BCC projects namely,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Illuminate – installation of further new low carbon lighting at City Hall due to access to additional funds – NICE – training for innovative techniques for reducing and measuring city ICT carbon emissions – Sport I- addressing how urban sports are a tool for social inclusion – Sport II- learning from technological innovations to facilitate physical activity – namely encouraging people to use city walking trails
1.5	<p>Critically, the Council works with Eurocities to track EU legislation and lobby heavily to influence this and ultimately create savings for the city, e.g. EU Services Directive, Inspire Open Data Directive.</p>
1.6	<p>Profiling best practice is also a key objective to our engagement in Eurocities. Members will recall a highly successful Social Affairs conference hosted by BCC in April 2013, whereby the Council profiled its work in engaging local communities. The event led to an invitation to BCC to have a political representative at a subsequent EU event in October 2013 to share the Council's approaches to tackling youth unemployment and supporting SMEs.</p>
1.7	<p>Members will be aware that BCC engages in Eurocities meetings and events at both Officer and Member levels. Indeed on 12 June 2012, Members agreed to the establishment of a Members EU Working Group with a view to upskilling Councillors on EU affairs and ensuring consistency with regard to Members engagement in Europe. This working group met for the first time in December 2012 and meets bi monthly to discuss relevant EU policy and funding.</p>
1.8	<p>An overview of the benefits of engaging in Eurocities in 2013 is outlined in Appendix 1 of this report.</p>

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>Each year BCC participates in the Eurocities annual conference. Traditionally attendance has been through the Chair and Deputy Chair of Development or their nominees, as well as the Director of Development and the EU Manager. However, since 2013, Council has been represented by a nominee from the Council Members EU Working Group, along with the Director of Development and EU Manager or nominees.</p>
2.2	<p>The 2014 annual conference will take place in Munich, Germany from 5-7 November 2014. The theme of the conference is 'Sustainable Cities', focusing on how cities are turning to innovative ways of becoming more sustainable and</p>

	energy intelligent.
2.3	The conference will be structured around keynote speakers sessions, workshops, speed networking and the annual City awards ceremony, as well as the Mayor's debate. This session is only attended by BCC Members and not Officers. The 2014 Mayor's debate focus has yet to be confirmed. Members are asked to approve the attendance of a member of the EU Members Working Group or their nominee as well as the Director of Development and the European Manager at the 2014 AGM.
2.4	Over 400 delegates are expected to attend the event and the focus of many of the sessions will be to look at new EU policies and funding opportunities coming down the line for local authorities, particularly in the context of the new EU funding round 2014-2020.
2.5	In the lead up to the AGM, Officers will continue to work in the various working groups within the thematic fora of Eurocities. The work plan and expected BCC benefits per forum for BCC engagement is outlined in Appendix 1 of this report. Two key objectives for BCC over and above business as usual within Eurocities are to, in partnership with Derry City Council, host the Social Culture Forum in March 2014 and begin to secure funding for BCC projects through the new EU funding programmes.

3	Resource Implications
3.1	The annual membership of the Eurocities network for 2014 is €15,820.

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 asked to note the Eurocities work engaged in by BCC in 2013 and approve the proposed BCC work plan and participation with Eurocities for 2014.
5.2	Members are asked to approve payment of the annual subscription fee of €15,820 for Membership of the Eurocities network for 2014.
5.3	Members are asked to approve the attendance of a member of the Members EU Working Group or their nominee, as well as the Director of Development and the European Manager at the Eurocities Annual Conference in Munich from 5-7 November 2014.

6	Decision Tracking
Timeline: April 2014	Reporting Officer: John McGrillen

7	Documents Attached
Appendix 1 –BCC Eurocities output 2013 and proposed work plan 2014	