



Report to:	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee
Subject:	European Commission Award - Access City 2013
Date:	Friday 25 October 2013
Reporting	Hazel Francey, Good Relations Manager

Relevant Background Information	
1	The European Commission encourages all Member States to make their cities more accessible to people with disabilities and to older people.
2	The European Commission has an Award Scheme, open to cities with over 50,000 people, which provides an opportunity for EU cities to showcase and share their work and plans on accessibility. Cities are requested to demonstrate their activities and strategies designed to make cities barrier-free and better places to live for everyone.
3	The Equality & Diversity Officer acts as a liaison officer for the Council's work on disability and recently submitted an entry for the Access City Award.
4	The submission drew attention to the work of the Council and its support in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the sensory/therapy garden in Musgrave Park • the work of Shopmobility Belfast • the Good Morning Service • the DisabledGo website information • the Council's Disability Strategy and Action Plan • our Disability Champions, both at Chief Officer and Elected Member level • the Disability Consultative Forum and annual disability event for staff and partners • the regular disability feature in City Matters.

Key Issues	
5	The Commission has now informed us that the European Jury has selected the city of Belfast as a prize winner, although whether it is first, second, third place or simply a special mention, will now be known until the publication of the official press release by the European Commission on 3rd December 2013. Six other European cities have also been selected by the European Jury.

6	An official Award Ceremony and a Conference on Accessibility will be held in Brussels from the 3 – 4 December and the European Commission will meet the costs of travel and accommodation for two representatives from Belfast at this event.
7	The European Commission recommends that the city delegation is composed of the Lord Mayor of Belfast and the Accessibility Manager (or the person responsible for the disability/accessibility issues in the city administration).
8	The Lord Mayor is travelling to the USA on 4 December and will not be available and the officer with special responsibility for disability issues is the Equality & Diversity Officer, who prepared the Award entry.

	Equality and Good Relations Implications
9	This award nomination reflects well on the work of the Council in aiming to improve access within the city and is a positive indicator of our success in this area.

	Recommendations
10	The Committee is requested to note this report and grant authority for two representatives from Belfast to attend the Award Ceremony and Conference, as outlined above.