



Subject:	European Capital of Culture 2023 – Current status
Date:	6 December 2017
Reporting Officer:	Suzanne Wylie
Contact Officer:	Donal Durkan, Director or Development

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some-time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To update Committee on the recent developments in regards to the European Capital of Culture 2023 competition.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and that an options report on potential next steps will be brought forward when further information becomes available from Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sports (DCMS) and European Commission.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u> Members will be aware that the ECOC2023 bid is a two staged process with the initial key milestone recently reached with the stage 1 Bid Book submitted to DCMS on 27 Oct 2017 .

3.2	<p>A formal presentation (pitch) of stage 1 bid submission, followed by a detailed Q&A session with a panel of 12 National and European experts had been scheduled for Tuesday 28 November 2017. This process would have determined which of the five competing cities would be shortlisted to stage 2 of the process.</p>
3.3	<p>As Members will be aware, the European Commission recently announced that the UK will not be eligible to host the European Capital of Culture in 2023 along with a city from Hungary. On this basis, DCMS has written to all five competing cities confirming that the pre-selection presentation has been postponed. DCMS has also confirmed that senior political and official dialogue and negotiations are ongoing with the European Commission to try to put the ECOC competition back on track. The Council is actively involved in supporting these ongoing discussions. Once these negotiations have concluded we will proceed with the publication of the details of the bid.</p>
3.4	<p>On the 28 November, the five competing UK cities met with representatives from DCMS including John Glen MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Arts, Heritage and Tourism, to discuss the current position and possible next steps. A joint press statement from the 5 cities was released thereafter. In summary, the statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- acknowledged the huge and passionate support received locally, nationally and internationally in response to the surprising announcement by the European Commission;- recognised the commitment given by DCMS to try and resolve this issue and agree a clear way forward for the cities involved;- urged DCMS to continue negotiations with the European Commission on the legitimacy of its decision, particularly in the context that the UK has not yet left the EU and the terms of that departure are not yet agreed;- five cities have collectively requested that DCMS takes further legal advice on the status of the announcement as a matter of urgency;- recognised the urgent need to reach a conclusion in a timescale that allows the momentum created within the cities to be maintained.
3.5	<p>During Prime Minister's Question Time on 29 November, the First Secretary of State, Damian Green confirmed that Ministers are in urgent talks with the European Commission over the decision to exclude UK cities from entering the European Capital of Culture. He further stated that <i>"we are making sure that all those cities who applied can continue with their cultural development because cultural development has been shown to be an extremely good basis for the regeneration of cities and towns across the United Kingdom."</i></p>

3.6	Clearly, the position taken by the European Commission comes as a great disappointment to the city of Belfast, our citizens and wider cultural and business community who have invested significant time, energy and resources in the preparation of our bid. As part of the process the Council engaged directly with over 16,000 people, 120 stakeholder meetings and workshops as well as 5,000 surveys completed.
3.7	The Lord Mayor has recently written to the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker as well as the three Northern Ireland MEPs seeking urgent meetings to explore what options exist to help reinstate the process. This would allow our citizens, our cultural sector and wide range of partners to realise the ambition, energy and opportunities contained within the bid.
3.8	The Committee will be kept fully informed as further information on a possible way forward becomes available.
4.0	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>All financial and human resource implications attached to emerging options in terms of way forward will be brought to Committee attention.</p>
5.0	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>None</p>
6.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	None