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| Subject: | UNESCO Learning Cities - Belfast Festival of Learning 2024 |
| Date: | 11 April 2024 |
| Reporting Officer: | John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy Debbie Caldwell, Climate Commissioner |
| Contact Officers: | Kevin Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty Patricia Magee, Policy and Performance Analyst, |

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| Restricted Reports | |
| Is this report restricted? | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted. | |
| Insert number <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information relating to any individual. 2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual 3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information) 4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter 5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained 6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction 7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime | |
| If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted? | |
| After Committee Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| After Council Decision | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sometime in the future | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Never | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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

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| 1.0 | Purpose of Report |
| 1.1 | To update Members on the work underway in support of Belfast’s membership of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities and the repositioning of this work in the context of community planning including an update on the planned Belfast’s Festival of Learning 2024 which will take place between 22-27 April 2024. |
| 2.0 | Recommendations |
| 2.1 | Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) note the planned Belfast Festival of Learning launch event on Monday 22 April 2024 (recognised worldwide as Earth Day), 11am-1pm in 2 Royal Avenue and consider attendance. ii) help raise awareness of the week-long programme of free events which are available during the Belfast Festival of Learning Week (22 April - 27th April 2024) as attached at Appendix 1 iii) note the focus of this year’s Belfast Festival of Learning will be ‘Our Planet: Climate Action’. |
| 3.0 | Key Issues |
| | Background |
| 3.1 | Members may be aware that Belfast joined the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities in 2018 in recognition of the City’s commitment to promoting and encouraging lifelong learning for people of all ages. Within The Belfast Agenda, we have a vision that our city should be a great place for everyone to live and providing lifelong learning opportunities is a core part of this. Learning has the potential to transform lives for the better- it can build better relationships and help enhance quality of life for everyone in the city. |
| 3.2 | Belfast was awarded a UNESCO Learning Cities Award for outstanding learning in 2021. Whilst Belfast continues to play its role as a member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities as well as a member of an All-Island Network of Learning Cities, it is felt there is a real opportunity to build on Belfast’s Learning City status and to bring city stakeholders together to reenergise our focus and maximise the opportunities presented. It is important to recognise that it’s not about creating new initiatives but rather connecting and enhancing existing programmes and initiatives as well as aligning policy ambitions across multiple partners. A Learning Cities Leadership Group currently exists and comprises representatives from QUB, UU, BMET, BHSCT, PHA, Education Authority, Libraries NI, community partners and Council. |
| | Festival Learning Week (22-27 April 2024) |
| 3.3 | A key focus of the annual programme of work has been a ‘Festival of Learning’ which is a week-long programme of free interactive and engaging events. The festival showcases the range of learning opportunities that already exist in Belfast. Council officers have worked closely with community partners to develop a inclusive programme of citywide learning’ events to take place as part of a week-long festival of activity from 22nd April-27th April 2024 (refer to Appendix 1 for copy of events programme). |

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| 3.4 | Given the significance of the climate challenges facing the city the theme for this year's Festival of Learning Week is ' Our Planet: Climate Action '. The festival will deliver free events across the city which promote citizen awareness of, and engagement in initiatives focusing on lifelong learning in the context of the local and global climate emergency. This would align with the focus of the UNESCOs 6 th Annual Conference on Learning Cities (2024) which is 'Learning Cities at the forefront of climate action'. |
| 3.5 | Members are asked to help raise awareness through existing networks and encourage participation in the programme of events. |
| 4.0 | Financial & Resource Implications |
| 4.1 | £10K funding has been secured through the Public Health Agency in support of the delivery of the Belfast Festival of Learning. An additional £10k match funding from Council was agreed through SP&R Committee and funded through available in-year budgets within City and Organisational Strategy. |
| 5.0 | Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment |
| 5.1 | There are no Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs implications contained in this report. |
| 6.0 | Appendices |
| | Appendix 1: Belfast Festival of Learning Week Programme |