



<b>Subject:</b>	Horizon Cities@Heart Project update
<b>Date:</b>	21 November 2025
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Kevin Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty

### Restricted Reports

Is this report restricted?

Yes

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No

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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

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

After Council Decision

Sometime in the future

Never

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### Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes

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No

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<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the progress of the Horizon Europe Cities@Heart project and to seek agreement to approve the final agreed Consortium Agreement.

<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
2.1	The Committee are asked to note the contents of this report and agree that the Council signs the final agreed Consortium Agreement required for its participation in the Cities@Heart project.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	Members will recall that at its meeting on the 18 April 2025, the Committee agreed that council officials work with QUB and Belfast Healthy Cities to input to a joint funding submission to the Horizon Europe Innovative Health Initiative grant funding call. The intention was to develop an overall €15million funding bid across seven cities (named Cities@Heart) to enable work to be undertaken with the WHO Healthy Cities Network and innovative technology with the aim of reducing recognised cardiovascular risk factors in order to more effectively manage risk and prevent future cardiovascular events.
3.2	The Cities@Heart proposal focuses on obesity, hypertension, dyslipidaemia and diabetes as key drivers of cardiovascular disease and poor health. The intention is to identify effective public health activities which offer potential to scale-up. The project will also seek to develop and deploy strategies to leverage engagement and citizen empowerment, raise awareness of cardiovascular disease, effective prevention, early detection and optimal management to improve outcomes.
3.3	<p>The bid involves a range of representatives including public sector, academia and industry experts from across seven municipalities including Izmir (TR), Belfast (NI), Łódź (PL), Cork (IE), Udine (IT), Birmingham (EN) and Utrecht (NL). Each have diverse communities and a commitment to deploy multi-disciplinary health strategies. Working together with citizens and industry experts, each city would intend to apply a structured, multi-sector methodology which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. City-level approaches to reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease;</li> <li>ii. A digital ecosystem that will power the development of European health technology and economic growth;</li> <li>iii. Integration of health policy and health economics to deliver cost-effective city-level solutions; and</li> <li>iv. Sustainability at its core using an implementation framework that can apply across the 1800+ cities in the WHO European Healthy Cities Network.</li> </ul>
3.4	It is intended that the Cities@Heart project would build connections and capacity across a broad array of stakeholders, including citizens, patients, municipalities, healthcare providers, policymakers and industry experts, and support the next generation of health technology to address critical barriers in cardiovascular disease across Europe. Members will be aware of the significant health challenges, including cardiovascular disease, impacting on people across the

	<p>city and will also be aware that addressing health inequalities has been identified as a key priority set out in the Belfast Agenda.</p> <p><u>Current position</u></p>
3.5	<p>Following Committee agreement, council officials continued to work alongside colleagues from QUB and Belfast Healthy Cities to explore a possible role for Belfast and Council in the emerging Cities@Heart project proposal. Officers have also engaged with representatives from the other cities working on the development of the project proposal and exploring the opportunities and benefits which can be realised for Belfast through participation in Cities@Heart. Some early opportunities identified include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Awareness: City-wide campaigns to raise understanding of CVD risks, targeting communities with highest inequalities.</li> <li>▪ Prevention: Building on strong partnerships to tackle obesity, inactivity, smoking, and poor diet; share and learn from other cities.</li> <li>▪ Detection: Expansion of early identification of hypertension, diabetes, and dyslipidaemia in high-risk groups through community outreach and digital tools.</li> <li>▪ Inequalities: Strengthen and improve knowledge of available services and support across Belfast, focusing on deprived populations with the highest premature CVD mortality.</li> </ul>
3.6	<p>Ultimately, through the participation in the project, Belfast has a real opportunity to understand the deep rooted and multi-faceted issues impacting on people's health and to design and bring forward innovative solutions to deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A reduction in premature cardiovascular disease deaths (currently 35.8 per 100,000 vs 26.9 NI average)</li> <li>▪ Narrow the inequality gap between deprived and affluent wards (communities and neighbourhoods)</li> <li>▪ Create a healthier, more active and sustainable city through prevention, active travel and behavioural change</li> <li>▪ Position Belfast as a model city for equitable cardiovascular health and system-wide prevention</li> </ul>
3.7	<p>Pending notification of the Cities@Heart bid being successful, the organisations across the seven cities making the joint bid for funding are required to enter into a Consortium Agreement to specify the rights and obligations of each party and set out inter alia project management, governance, confidentiality etc between the parties. As a prerequisite to participation in the project, the Council is required to enter into the Collaboration Agreement. The draft Agreement has been reviewed by the relevant Council officers including Legal Services who</p>

	have provided comments to the project administrators to inform the terms of the final Consortium Agreement.
3.8	<p>In terms of specific areas which have been initially identified whereby Council can provide support as the Cities@Heart programme progresses include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project management</li> <li>• Communication, dissemination and engagement</li> <li>• Civil society representative</li> <li>• Prototyping and demonstration</li> <li>• Public procurer of results</li> </ul>
3.9	<p>Members will note that discussions are underway with Belfast Healthy Cities (BHC) in terms of how they can support these areas of work from a Belfast perspective. The Council will be required to enter into a formal Grant Agreement with the IHI JU in respect of the funding being awarded under the Cities@Heart bid and alongside this, the Council shall enter into a MOU with Belfast Healthy Cities to set out how both parties will work together on the project.</p> <p>It is understood that the combined budget for the Council and Belfast Healthy Cities for the overall administration of the programme is in the region of €75,000 for 3 years.</p>
3.10	<p>It is further understood that additional project-specific funding awards would be allocated to Belfast, if successful, in securing delivery of projects within the overall Cities@Heart funding award. Any such opportunities would be presented to Committee for review.</p>
	<b>Financial and Resource Implications</b>
3.11	<p>There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Officer time will be required to help shape the emerging bid and programme of work.</p>
	<b>Equality and Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</b>
3.12	<p>There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications arising directly from this report.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Appendices - Documents Attached</b>
	None