



Subject:	UNESCO Learning Cities - Belfast Festival of Learning 2024
Date:	15th December, 2023
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy Kevin Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty
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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 individual3. 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 matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. 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"/>

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

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To update the Committee 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. on the proposed approach to Belfast's Festival of Learning 2024 and request Departmental consideration of support for the development of events for inclusion in the Programme.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) reaffirm our commitment to Belfast's designation as a member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities; ii) note the proposed Belfast Festival of Learning will run from 22nd April (recognised worldwide as Earth Day) – 27th April 2024; iii) note the proposed focus (Climate Action) of the Belfast Festival of Learning in April 2024; iv) note the synergies with the ambitions and plans across the Council; v) approve the proposed £10k match-funding to be allocated from existing budgets in support of the festival and associated work; and vi) consider and agree the proposed open call for small grant funding (up to a maximum of £500 to support community groups to design and delivery events.
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

- 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 are currently in the process of developing a citywide programme of 'learning' events to take place as part of a week-long festival of activity from **22nd April-27th April 2024**. We want to work with as wide a range of partners as possible to deliver an inclusive programme of citywide events with three key aims:
- To shine a light on the value of learning in all its forms and promote Belfast as an inclusive learning city for all.
 - To engage and inspire people of all ages, in a wide range of settings across the city, with a variety of learning opportunities.
 - To raise awareness of the engaging, fun and surprising ways in which we can learn.
- 3.4 Given the significance of the climate challenges facing the city and the need for significant behavioural change as well as leadership, it is proposed that this climate action is an overarching theme for the 2024 Festival of Learning. A core strand of the festival will be events 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 UNESCO's 6th Annual Conference on Learning Cities (2024) which is 'Learning Cities at the forefront of climate action'.
- 3.5 This proposed focus not only aligns with UNESCO's global call for member states to strengthen the collective approach to urgent issues around climate change, but it also provides alignment across a number of internal and external strategies and priority areas, for example:
- Refreshed **Belfast Agenda's** commitment to Our Planet
 - Belfast Agenda emphasis on Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel
 - **Belfast 2024's** principles of People, Place and **Planet**
 - The draft **Economic Strategy** for Belfast's commitment to Enabling a **Path to Net Zero**
 - A **Bolder Vision** for Belfast
 - Healthy Cities 6 thematic areas: People, Place, Prosperity, Participation, **Planet**, Peace
 - QUB commitment to **Net Zero**
 - UU **Sustainable Travel** ambitions and plans
 - NIHE commitment to **retrofitting housing**.
 - **Green Port** and **Net Zero zones** established in Titanic Quarter
 - Belfast in top 10 ranking of Global Destination Sustainability Index for **tourism**
- 3.6 It is felt that there are significant opportunities to align with and seek to progress many of these linkages as part of the planning and implementation of the 2024 Festival of Learning. We are also actively

	<p>exploring the potential for senior officials from UNESCO to visit Belfast during the festival week and contribute to the emerging programme as well as strengthen the All-Island Network of Learning Cities.</p>
3.7	<p>Feedback from recent engagement events undertaken as part of the refresh of the Belfast Agenda has highlighted a need for a citywide education programme which helps build awareness around the need for and benefits of effective planning to address climate challenges. The messaging needs to land with residents in terms of for example, helping to tackle poverty (reducing heating costs), creating new jobs and opportunities through green growth, helping alleviate impact of flooding and securing a city (place) for our future generations.</p>
	<p>Grant Funding</p>
3.8	<p>As part of the Festival Week, it would be the intention to develop an open call for small grants (up to a maximum of £500) to help local groups to develop and/or showcase an event. This approach is subject to SP&R Committee consideration and approval. It should be noted that £10,000 funding has been secured through the Public Health Agency in support of the festival and officers are actively exploring other sources of possible funding to enhance the programme.</p>
3.9	<p>It is proposed that a £10,000 match funding is allocated and ring-fenced from within existing departmental budgets within council to support the Festival of Learning</p>
	<p>Next Steps</p>
3.10	<p>In order to deliver on the festival, it is proposed that a festival planning group to be established comprising of representatives from: Healthy Cities, Libraries, QUB, UU, MET, VCSE and from BCC Cultural, EDU, Climate, City Regeneration and Marketing and Comms teams, with a view to co-designing an impactful festival programme. The emerging programme should take account of the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engage and inspire people of all ages, in a wide range of settings across the city, with a variety of learning opportunities, looking at ‘learning’ in its broadest sense. ▪ Promote understanding of and discussion around climate change and the need to transition to a green economy in the broadest sense / enabling action to address climate issues/ looking at climate, poverty and health inequalities with a particular focus on food, energy and transport.
	<p>Financial and Resource Implications</p>
3.11	<p>£10K funding has been secured through the Public Health Agency in support of the delivery of the Festival of Learning. An additional £10k match funding from Council is proposed and will be funded through available in-year budgets within City and Organisational Strategy.</p>

	Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
3.12	There are no Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs implications contained in this report.
4.0	Documents Attached
	None