



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	European Local Democracy Week 2012
Date:	Friday, 24th August, 2012
Reporting Officer:	Mr. John McGrillen, Director of Development, (extension 3470) Mr. Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager (extension 6314)
Contact Officer:	Ms. Laura Leonard, European Manager, (extension 3577) Mrs. Julie Lilley, Democratic Services Officer (extension 6321) Mrs. Lorraine Wallace, Children and Young People Coordinator (extension 3595)

1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) is an annual event held each October. The overarching purpose of ELDW is to promote a better involvement of citizens in public life, enhance transparency of local government mechanisms and improve social cohesion, in particular among young people and disadvantaged groups.
1.2	<p>ELDW builds on Local Democracy Week in which the Council has been involved in previous years by organising and hosting events involving young people from across the city.</p> <p>In 2011 the Council organised and delivered a Political Speed Dating Event in the City Hall. The event allowed members of the Council's Youth Forum to interact with their local Councillors who undertake the role of Youth Champion within their Party.</p> <p>This was an innovative way for both parties to meet and find out more about the role they both play in the community and how Councillors can represent the rights and views of young people at a local level.</p> <p>The feedback from the Councillors after the event was very positive and it was viewed as a fun and convenient way for them to meet young people from across the City on a one to one basis and get a sense of the issues they considered most</p>

important.

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>Following on from the event last year, officers were asked to examine the practicality of organising a larger event which involved more young people from across the City. Accordingly, this year to mark ELDW the Council will be hosting a Belfast EurVoice Event. This will be the first time that such an event has taken place in Belfast.</p>
2.2	<p>EurVoice is a unique community outreach scheme designed to engage and empower young people, including those from disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds. The purpose of EurVoice is to provide a platform and framework for young people to take ownership of their own opinions and place in society, to express their views to people in authority, and to discover their own importance in shaping the future. EurVoice is a sister programme to the European Youth Parliament debating event which brings young people together on a national and international level.</p>
2.3	<p>A project steering group has been set up to organise the event comprising officers from Community Services, Democratic Services, Corporate Communications and the European Unit as well as external organisations which include the European Commission Office of Northern Ireland, Where is My Public Servant (WIMPS) and the European Youth Parliament.</p>
2.4	<p>The EurVoice event will take place in the Banqueting Hall on Monday, 8th October from 12 noon to 4.00 p.m. and will target Belfast schools and youth organisations.</p> <p>A series of activities are planned including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mini-interviews upon arrival to ascertain what participants think of democracy ;• Participating in a mock voting exercise;• Use of technology to conduct an opinion poll on a range of issues affecting young people, enabling instant feedback• Workshops• Panel Q&A session• Closing mini-interviews to establish the impact of the event on participants' viewpoints
2.5	<p>The participation of elected Members is crucial to the success of the event. Along with the Lord Mayor, the involvement of the Party nominated Youth Champions will assist in achieving the outlined aims as well as breaking down barriers between young citizens, the Council and its Members.</p>
2.5	<p>The EurVoice event will form part of the Opportunity Europe Programme of events which are being hosted during the months of September and October by a range of organisations including the Council for Europe.</p>
2.6	<p><u>12 Star City Status</u></p> <p>Cities which participate in ELDW can also apply for 12 Star City Status. This status is intended to highlight the commitment which a city has in raising its citizens' awareness of local democracy, the role of local councillors and the opportunity</p>

	provided by participatory democracy. In order to achieve 12 Star City Status, a series of criteria must be met including planned events incorporating a transnational element. To this end, a young MEP from another European Member State is to be invited to attend and participate in the Belfast EurVoice event.
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3	Resource Implications
3.1	<p>It is expected that the event will cost approximately £3,100 which will include hospitality, IT provision and travel and accommodation should it be required for invited guests.</p> <p>Provision for the cost of the event has been made within the Chief Executive's Department revenue estimates.</p>

4	Equality Implications
	N/A

5	Recommendations
5.1	<p>Members are requested to note the content of the report and agree to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The involvement of the Party Youth Champions (or nominees) to the ELDW event on 8 October 2012▪ The costs of the Council hosting the EurVoice event as part of ELDW

6	Decision Tracking
<p>Officers responsible:</p> <p>Mr. John McGrillen, Director of Development Mr. Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager</p> <p>October, 2012</p>	

7	Key to Abbreviations
<p>ELDW- European Local Democracy Week WIMPS- Where Is My Public Servant</p>	