



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee
Subject:	European Local Democracy Week 2014
Date:	Friday, 25th April, 2014
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) Ms. Eilish McGoldrick, Democratic Services Support Assistant (extension 6307)

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	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.
1.3	In 2012 and 2013, the Council organised and delivered EurVoice events which allowed pupils from Secondary Schools, members of the Council's Youth Forum, representatives of the European Youth Parliament and participants from Community Groups in the City to interact with their local Councillors who undertake the role of Youth Champion within their Party.
1.4	The events have proven to be very successful and feedback from the Schools, Community Groups and from the Councillors after the events were very positive. Participants felt that last year's event was an enjoyable and diverse way for them all to meet on a one to one basis and get a sense of and discuss through many mutually important and relevant issues.

2	Key Issues
2.1	<p>EurVoice is a unique community outreach programme 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. The nature of the event serves to influence the role young people could potentially have in local democracy decision-making. EurVoice is a sister programme to the European Youth Parliament debating event which brings young people together on a national and international level.</p>
2.2	<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 and the European Youth Parliament.</p>
2.3	<p>Following the success of EurVoice 2012 and 2013, it is felt that it would be worth organising an even more engaging event where both young people and Councillors could meet to discuss the relevant issues which face the young citizens of our City and to build on the themes discussed at the previous event. In addition to the participants who attended in 2013, invitations will also be extended to young people in the wider community.</p>
2.4	<p>The EurVoice event will take place in the Great Hall on Tuesday, 14th October, 2014 from 12.00 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"> • 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; • Facilitated workshops; • Panel Q&A session with Members of Council <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>

3	Resource Implications
3.1	<p>It is expected that the event will cost approximately £3,300 which will include hospitality, IT provision and MC costs.</p>
3.2	<p>Provision for the cost of the event has been made within the Chief Executive's Departmental revenue estimates.</p>

4	Equality Implications
	None.

5	Recommendations
5.1	Members are asked to agree to the hosting of the EurVoice event as outlined

6	Decision Tracking
Officers responsible: Mr. John McGrillen, Director of Development Mr. Stephen McCrory, Democratic Services Manager October, 2014	

7	Key to Abbreviations
ELDW- European Local Democracy Week	