Belfast City Council

Subject:	EUROCITIES AGM Attendance
Date:	14 October 2015
Reporting Officer:	Donal Durkan, Interim Director of Development
Contact Officer:	Laura Leonard, European & International Relations Unit Manager

Is this report restricted?		Yes		No	X
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?		Yes	X	No	

1.0	**Purpose of Report**
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval for the attendance of the Lord Mayor and the European and International Relations Manager at the 2015 EUROCITIES AGM in Malmo and Copenhagen.
1.2	The annual conference is the main political networking event of the EUROCITIES year. Around 500 Officers and elected Members (mostly Mayors) attend each year to debate on key policy areas and challenges facing cities. These range from migration, to air quality, poverty, and job creation. This year, Mayor to Mayor debates will take place on key urban challenges including air quality, employment, making cities attractive for investment and urban mobility.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	Members are asked to agree Committee support for the attendance of the Lord Mayor and the European and International Relations Manager at the 2015 EUROCITIES AGM from 4

	– 6 November in Malmo and Copenhagen, at a maximum cost of £1,250, which can be covered from within the EU Unit's existing annual budget.
3.0	**Main report**
3.1	The 2015 EUROCITIES Annual Conference will take place in Malmo and Copenhagen from 4 – 6 November. EUROCITIES is the network of major European cities, comprised of local elected Members and Officers of over 130 of Europe's largest cities and 40 partner cities that between them govern over 130 million citizens across 35 countries. As a network, it monitors and influences EU policy and legislation, builds early intelligence and access to EU funding. It also provides a platform for council Officers and elected Members to share best practice and work together on developing solutions to social inclusion, economic development, knowledge society, environment and mobility.
3.2	The conference is an important milestone in the year of work undertaken by the organisation and its various working groups. It is also a key part of the ongoing work on the EU Urban Agenda, empowering cities to drive smart, sustainable and inclusive growth for Europe. Appendix One outlines the detail of the conference programme.
3.3	This year, a new format for politician's debates has been introduced. Four parallel roundtable debates will take place providing a wider platform for political debate on key areas of urban development, including: – Air quality – Employment – Making cities attractive for investment and urban mobility – Urban mobility
3.4	These topics align to key areas of work within the Belfast Agenda and Council's strategies including the Integrated Economic Strategy, Skills and Employment Strategy and the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy.
3.5	Specifically, the conference will consider best practice examples of how other cities have addressed air quality problems, youth unemployment and city economic inactivity, how to compete in a global marketplace for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and attracting international populations as well as tackling urban mobility challenges, such as neighbourhood connectivity and sustainable travel.

3.6	Other elements of the conference include:
	– Keynote speaker for the 2015 conference - Philip Rode, Director of Cities Institute at the London School of Economics
	– Speed networking sessions to exchange views and experience of urban policies and innovative projects
	– Site visits to a number of regeneration schemes in Malmo and Copenhagen
	– Awards ceremony celebrating best practice urban development projects from across Europe.
3.7	It is proposed that the Lord Mayor and the European & International Relations Manager attend the event in order to:
	– Network with other city colleagues and develop ideas for collaborative EU funded projects to deliver on elements of the City Centre and Future City plans
	– Promote the ongoing development in Belfast focusing on the City Centre Regeneration and Investment Strategy and Belfast Agenda
	– Learn from best practice in other cities in the field of urban development in order to inform future development activity in Belfast.
3.8	Members will be aware that Belfast City Council has been a member of the EUROCITIES network since the 1990s. This network brings together over of 140 of Europe's largest local authorities at Officer and Member level. The secretariat for the network is based in Brussels with a staff and Executive Board of elected Members from cities throughout Europe. Through relevant Council Officer engagement, Belfast City Council has participated regularly in the following thematic fora around which EUROCITIES is structured:
	– Social Affairs
	– Economic Development
	– Environment
	– Culture
	– Knowledge Society.
3.9	Meetings are held three times a year in rotated venues around Europe, and each Forum has a maximum of eight working groups. An AGM is held each November to provide a political platform for its Members on key challenges facing cities. Around 500 elected Members and Officers attend and cities bid to host the conference. Council may wish to consider the potential to bid to host the 2017 or 2018 Conference in the new Waterfront

	Hall.
3.10	The themes being addressed through this year's conference align fully to the Belfast Agenda. Many member cities are successful international cities with best practice to share in many areas highlighted within the Belfast Agenda as outlined above. It is intended that a post conference report will be presented to the Committee to disseminate the learning and contacts made at the event. The reports contents will also be shared with the new City Centre Development Team.
3.11	Financial and Resource Implications The maximum cost of attendance at the EUROCITIES AGM is £1,250 which can be covered from within the EU Unit's current annual budget.
3.12	Equality and Good Relations Implications There are no specific Equality and Good Relations implications attached to this report.
4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
4.1	Appendix 1 – EUROCITIES 2015 programme Appendix 2 – EUROCITIES: Background and involvement of Belfast City Council