

CABINET MEETING – 5 OCTOBER 2011 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I	
Title of Report: EUROCITIES – Conference and Annual General Meeting	
Author(s): Chief Executive	
Purpose of Report: This report seeks authorisation for the Cabinet Secretary to attend the EUROCITIES Conference and Annual General Meeting	
Description of Decision: Cabinet is requested to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Authorise attendance at the Conference and Annual General Meeting from 2 - 5 November and the consequential travel of the Cabinet Secretary to Genoa, Italy (ii) Note the progress being made and benefits generated through Eurocities membership 	
Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework? *Yes	
If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework	
Suggested reason(s) for Decision: It is important that the City Council engages effectively within the network to identify and pursue the opportunities EUROCITIES can open up for Sunderland, and that Sunderland continues to demonstrate its commitment to be an active partner in order to be able to maximise the benefits of those opportunities for the city. The theme of the 2011 Conference and AGM is in line with current priorities for the City Council and wider Sunderland Partnership objectives. The Conference programme will provide an opportunity to share experience in key areas and take part in discussions about the Work Programme for the network for 2012.	
Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected: A decision could be taken not to take part in the Conference and AGM. This would send a negative message about the City's commitment to participation in EUROCITIES and mean that key opportunities to develop and share good practice in important policy areas as well as influence the future Work Programme of the network would be lost.	
Is this a "Key Decision" as defined in the Constitution? No	Relevant Scrutiny Committee: Management
Is it included in the Forward Plan? No	

EUROCITIES – CONFERENCE AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report seeks authorisation for attendance at the EUROCITIES Conference and Annual General Meeting.

2.0 Description of Decision

- 2.1 Cabinet is requested to:
- i) Authorise attendance at the Conference and Annual General Meeting from 2 - 5 November and the consequential travel of the Cabinet Secretary to Genoa, Italy
 - ii) Note the progress being made and benefits generated through Eurocities membership

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Created in 1986, EUROCITIES is the network of major European cities. Membership is open to cities which are recognised as important regional centres with an international dimension, and with at least 250,000 inhabitants. EUROCITIES works along three complementary strands of activities: networking to share and improve knowledge, lobbying to develop and influence policies, and campaigning to raise public awareness.
- 3.2 Sunderland City Council was accepted into the EUROCITIES network at the Annual General Meeting in November 2007. This was the subject of a report to Cabinet in October 2007, giving background information on the network itself, and information on the three strands of activities referred to in paragraph 3.1 above. This report also outlined how these activities are taken forward through six Forums focused on a series of thematic areas: Culture, Economic Development, Environment, Knowledge Society, Mobility, and Social Affairs.
- 3.3 The theme of the 2011 annual conference is 'Planning for People'. The conference will underline the importance for city planners and politicians of finding innovative ways to promote social cohesion and prosperity through urban regeneration. Discussions will address the challenges and opportunities of the participative democracy process, in terms of planning with people as opposed to planning for people.
- 3.4 The conference will provide an opportunity to share experience on approaches used. As host city, Genoa will bring its own experience in this area to the debate, and will invite other cities to contribute their experiences. This will be achieved through a series of panel debates, keynote speeches and a political Mayors' Debate, as well as technical visits.
- 3.5 Particular examples of good practice will also be highlighted through the annual Awards which are made by EUROCITIES under three headings – innovation, participation and co-operation. The theme for the awards is linked to the theme for the Conference and AGM.

4.0 Current Position

- 4.1 EUROCITIES activity within the City Council to date has been concentrated on three of the six Forum areas, which were prioritised initially: Economic Development, Knowledge Society, and Environment.
- 4.2 Within the Economic Development Forum, officers have continued to participate in a range of Working Groups linked to City Council priorities. This has provided an opportunity to share experience on approaches to supporting the Creative Industries which, taking the broader definition used by many European cities that also encompasses Software and Technology, relates to two key sectors within the city's Economic Master Plan. Through the Forum's Cohesion Working Group, EUROCITIES has lobbied to ensure that urban priorities are reflected in the development of the European Commission's budget policy for 2014-20 and the structural funds in particular. These discussions will intensify in the next three years. Membership of the Cohesion Working Group enables the council to contribute to EUROCITIES' lobbying on relevant aspects of policy such as the structural funds regulations. It also will inform the City Council's position in responding to government consultations on European funding.
- 4.3 Officers also started work during 2011 on the Cascade project, which is led by EUROCITIES. Cascade brings together 18 partner cities from 11 European countries including Gateshead, Birmingham, and Edinburgh from within the UK alongside Sunderland. The project is part-funded under the EU's Intelligent Energy Europe Programme and is the first trans-national project which Sunderland has been successful in securing funding for through its membership of the network. The project is focused on accelerating the implementation of partner cities' sustainable energy action plans under 3 key themes: urban planning, renewable energy sources and distributed energy generation, and energy in urban transport. Sunderland's primary role will focus on the energy in urban transport theme which links closely to the city's priority, as a major centre for the European automotive industry and development of electric vehicles, of developing low carbon transport infrastructure.
- 4.4 As part of the Cascade project, Sunderland will be peer-reviewed in Spring 2012 on its experience with installing electric vehicle charging points and its approach to developing and implementing low carbon urban transport initiatives. The Peer Learning Event is expected to: support Sunderland in addressing knowledge gaps on the integration of smart card technology with electric charging points and public transport; build know-how, capacity and experience in developing the low carbon infrastructure across the City; and develop skills and employment opportunities in the low carbon economy.
- 4.5 Under the Environment Forum, the City Council is a signatory to the EUROCITIES Declaration on Climate Change which complements the EU's Covenant of Mayors to which the authority is also a signatory. Participation in the Cascade project is expected to contribute towards the city's Sustainable Energy Action Plan, which is a requirement linked to the EU Covenant of Mayors. Ongoing liaison with the network's Environment policy officers also provides the city with additional opportunities to share good practice in this field and to influence related policies at national and European level.

- 4.6 Within the Knowledge Society Forum, officers have continued to participate in a range of Working Groups. There has been a realignment of the working groups for 2011/12. E-Inclusion has continued as a Working Group and Sunderland has been invited to become Vice-Chair of this group, an indication of the extent to which Sunderland has now come to be viewed as a valuable partner within the network. Two new Working Groups have also been formed that are in line with the strategic direction of the City Council: Open Data, and Smart Cities. Sunderland's approach to Open Data has already been the subject of a presentation to the Open Data Working Group,
- 4.7 Officers continue to explore opportunities for support through EU trans-national programmes related to ICT to develop and exchange good practice, or to pilot initiatives linked to the identified Working Group areas. This includes programmes such as the 7th Framework Regions Programme which will have a call for proposals in 2012. Participation within the Knowledge Society Forum also provides the opportunity to build knowledge relating to potential future opportunities, such as the Horizon 2020 funding framework which is due to commence in 2014.
- 4.8 An additional opportunity, linked to the European Year of Volunteering in 2011, has also been created through engagement in EUROCITIES. Sunderland was successful as a partner in an EU funded project, 'Madrid en Red', supported through the Europe for Citizens Programme and led by a volunteer organisation in Madrid. The project, which is in line with the city's Volunteering Strategy, will focus attention on different issues related to volunteering through a series of events during its lifetime. A delegation led by Sunderland City Council of voluntary and community representatives, mainly young people aged 18-30, took part in the first event which took place in March. This concentrated on youth volunteering and how more young people can be encouraged to volunteer.
- 4.9 Participation in the 'Madrid en Red' project, as the only UK partner, provides Sunderland with an opportunity to showcase examples of volunteering, citizenship and local decision-making. Volunteer delegates, from a range of organisations across the city, who attend events will contribute their experiences and the lessons learned will then be shared at a local level with voluntary and community networks throughout the city and region.
- 4.9 A fuller report on activity within EUROCITIES during 2011 will be included in the annual report on the International Strategy which will be brought to Cabinet in Spring 2012.

5.0 Reasons for the Decision

- 5.1 EUROCITIES provides a strong platform through which to influence EU policy and legislation, exchange knowledge and experience, and develop best practice through dialogue with European Union institutions and fellow cities within the network. It is a network which requires both Officer and Elected Member involvement at appropriate times. The opportunities represented by membership of EUROCITIES are in line with the City Council's approach to international engagement as set out in the International Strategy.
- 5.2 It is important that the City Council engages effectively within the network to identify and pursue the opportunities EUROCITIES can open up for Sunderland, and that Sunderland continues to demonstrate its commitment to

be an active partner in order to be able to maximise the benefits of those opportunities for the city. The theme of the 2011 Conference and AGM is in line with current priorities for the City Council and wider Sunderland Partnership objectives.

- 5.3 The Conference programme will provide an opportunity to share experience in key areas through discussion sessions and technical visits, and see examples of good practice which may be able to be adopted or adapted within Sunderland. Participation in the Conference and AGM will also provide the opportunity to take part in discussions about the Work Programme for the network for 2012.

6.0 Alternative Options

- 6.1 A decision could be taken not to take part in the Conference and AGM. This would send a negative message about the City's commitment to participation in EUROCITIES and mean that key opportunities to develop and share good practice in important policy areas as well as influence the future Work Programme of the network would be lost.

7.0 Relevant Consultations

- 7.1 Financial Implications

Costs for participation will be met from existing cash-limited budgets.

8.0 Background Papers

EUROCITIES Conference and AGM Programme