

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Enterprise, Planning & Infrastructure
DATE	20 April 2010
DIRECTOR	Gordon McIntosh
TITLE OF REPORT	SURF (Sustainable Urban Fringes) Project Update
REPORT NUMBER:	EPI/10/095

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to provide Elected Members with a progress update on the SURF (Sustainable Urban Fringes) project that Aberdeen City Council are Lead Beneficiary for and seek representation at the SURF 2010 conference.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee:

1. Notes the progress to date of the SURF project, with specific acknowledgement of the signing of the partnership agreements between Aberdeen City Council as Lead Beneficiary and the project partners;
2. Approves the attendance of the Convener of Enterprise, Planning and Infrastructure, or her delegate, at the SURF Annual Conference in Enschede, The Netherlands on 27-28 May 2010.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The SURF project is a three year European project that is funded through a combination of the Interreg IV B programme and match funding from the Council. SURF is the only EU project that Aberdeen City Council is Lead Beneficiary for and project managing. In addition Aberdeen City Council is a project partner within SURF.

The likely cost for each attendee at the SURF Annual Conference is approximately £600. This covers travel, accommodation and subsistence. As the Council is leading this project, the costs for the officers attending will be fully met and reimbursed from the project's budget. Any travel and accommodation costs for an Elected Member will be met from the Lead Partner Budget.

1. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

The SURF project enables Aberdeen to realise the City's Vision, to be "a city which is vibrant, dynamic, forward looking – an even better place to live and work, where people can expect high-quality services that meet their needs".

This project supports the City's Community Plan and the priority Outcomes within the City's Single Outcome Agreement; in particular Outcome 12 "we value and enjoy our built and natural environment and enhance it for future generations".

2. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are risks associated with national and overseas travel. As far as possible, measures relevant to the destination will be taken to reduce any risks in line with Council Policy.

The Council benefits from leading the SURF project through enhanced productivity via improved spatial planning guidelines and transnational learning with the SURF project partners; which will assist to deliver better and more efficient Council services.

Attendance at the SURF Annual Conference will give the Council the opportunity to examine areas it can positively influence within European policy, discuss the possibilities of best practice and plan for the next stages of the SURF project. The Council can learn from this and put this learning into practice locally. The SURF activities are implemented in line with the aim of achieving a high quality and sustainable environment and make better use of our urban fringe areas.

It is important that Aberdeen is fully represented in European matters and can take advantage of all opportunities to influence policy and developing transnational projects for the City's benefit. European Policy takes full account of the Equal Opportunities Policy of the Council. This report does not require an Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment.

This project supports the Council's commitment to sustainable development with an emphasis on better land use opportunities in the developing market for sustainable urban fringes and delivering better and more efficient Council services. By attending the Annual Conference, it will give the Council the opportunity to look at best practice models that can raise the quality of life through increasing economic opportunity for all on a socially and environmentally sustainable basis.

European activities are implemented with the aim of achieving a high quality and sustainable environment and SURF will specifically address this through the project outcomes. The principles of social inclusion underpin European cohesion policy. European representation and inter-regional networking contributes to the City's efforts to maximise opportunities and to promote its interests, both at home and overseas, with the aim of creating a vibrant and sustainable economy.

3. REPORT

3.1. SURF Project Background

Aberdeen City Council is the lead beneficiary in a three year (2009 – 2012) European Union (EU) Interreg IVB SURF (Sustainable Urban Fringes) project which aims to develop new approaches for the urban fringes that strengthen the link between the services provided by these areas and city region

competitiveness. The project will analyse and test innovative applications of new policy and governance tools and will identify good practice for dissemination to other regions. This project will also put Sustainable Urban Fringe development higher on the political agenda in all partner regions, the national and regional governments and at EU policy level.

By taking the lead partner role in the SURF project the Council will have control on what happens in this project and how we would like to see policies and tools developed.

The Council is leading 15 partners from 6 other European North Sea Region countries (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, The Netherlands, the UK).

There are four main Work Packages (WPs) to the project:

WP1: Project Management

Aberdeen City Council

WP1 has overall project management responsibility of the SURF project and manages the additional work packages in line with delivering the project's objectives and deliverables.

WP 2 – Publicity & Communications

Aberdeen City Council

WP2 has overall responsibility for developing the communications strategy for SURF in line with Interreg IVB practices to promote the SURF project and raise the profile of the activities that the project partners are entering into.

WP 3 – Review & Analysis

School of the Built Environment Leeds Metropolitan University

WP3 has overall responsibility of reviewing and analysing urban fringe functions and devising analytical functions for WP4 testing and implementation with the project partners.

WP 4 – Testing & Implementation

City of Enschede

WP4 has overall responsibility of working closely with WP3 to test and implement the analytical functions devised through the review and analysis stage of the project.

3.2 Aberdeen City Council: Progress to date

The Council is leading WP1 Project Management and WP2 Communications & Publicity and has responsibility for managing the other work package leaders. Significant progress has been made since the 'kick off conference' hosted in Aberdeen in December 2009.

The project has commenced with the work package leaders communicating regularly to progress the project in the lead up to the first full SURF conference in Enschede.

The significant milestones that have been achieved to date are:

- The creation of the SURF project plan and risk register
- The signing of the SURF partnership agreements
- The first stage of WP3 and WP4 activities – the first SWOT analysis has taken place with project partners to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to urban fringes
- WP3 are creating the analytical framework for their work package ready to distribute to all partners before the Enschede conference
- The SURF communication plan has been drafted and the initial kick off communication activities, such as the creation the SURF logo and message and the progress towards initiating the SURF website, are in progress
- The March claim period has passed and was the first major claim period for project partners
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The signing of the SURF partnership agreements is of particular significance as this creates a legally binding obligation between the Council as the Project's lead beneficiary and each individual partner. These agreements have been undertaken to ensure that they are in Scots Law and meets the Council's Standing Orders for procurement and contracting.

3.2.1 SURF Annual Conference

The Annual Conference will take place from 27-28 May 2010, in Enschede, The Netherlands. Due to the position of Aberdeen City Council leading the SURF project, it is recommended that a number of attendees from the organisation should attend this conference. Attendees will include the Interim SURF Project Manager Jan Falconer, WP2 Leader Alison Leslie, the SURF External Funding Officer Susan Fraser, and Aberdeen's Local Project Leader Sinclair Laing.

The Programme is being designed (see attached Appendix I Draft Programme) to be suitable for the wide range all partners and a learning experience for Politicians. It is planned on Day 2 of the conference to be a ceremonial signing of the Partner's Commitment to the Project. There is a commitment from Partners from the Netherlands that Politicians will be in attendance, therefore it is requested that the Convener of this Committee, or her delegate also attend the conference to demonstrate the Council's commitment and support for leading the project and managing the delivery of its objectives

The agenda is spread over three days. An Elected Member is invited to attend the relevant sessions. This level of participation is aimed at increasing awareness, understanding, building trans-national and national relationships as well as enabling shared learning of best practice from our North Sea partners which will benefit Aberdeen City and the SURF project.

4. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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5. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Economic Development Sub-Committee Minutes, 23rd February 2009, Approval of Aberdeen City Council to lead the SURF project

<http://committees.aberdeencity.gov.uk/CeListDocuments.aspx?Committeeld=323&MeetingId=702&DF=23/02/2009&Ver=2>