

PRESS RELEASE: Bristol's partnership success highlighted at European cities summit

Cities across Europe should develop strong partnerships between universities, public bodies and the business sector so that academic, social and commercial research can be better integrated and help drive forward city economies, Bristol City Council Leader Cllr Barbara Janke will tell a meeting of European leaders on Thursday, November 23rd 2006.

Cllr Janke is to help lead a discussion at the Eurocities Conference in Manchester on the importance that partnerships can play in supporting the development of the 'knowledge economy'. Bristol is a key member of Eurocities, a network that brings together elected politicians and local authority officers from across the continent to share best practice. Some 105 European cities are represented at this week's event.

Cllr Janke argues that Bristol's experience is a model for many across Europe - with successful links across a wide range of agencies now enabling research and information to be shared extensively.

"Here in Bristol some of the most innovative and exciting scientific, medical, digital and technological breakthroughs are being made thanks to the way our universities, businesses and public bodies are working in partnership," she says. "There is much more we can still do to harness the expertise across all these sectors and bring it together to deliver further benefits for the businesses and communities of the city. However, I believe there are many aspects of Bristol's approach to partnership that can already be held up as a model for other cities across Europe."

Bristol's Science City partnership - set up after the city was named as just one of six UK Science Cities by Chancellor Gordon Brown - is bringing together all sectors to promote research and development and strengthen the city's position as a powerful location for innovative technological and creative organisations, she says.

And Connecting Bristol, the partnership delivering the city's bid to win the government's national digital challenge, is linking expertise across Bristol to develop and deliver new digital solutions - in particular to provide people with better access via the internet to improve their skills, use public services and get involved in the democratic process.

"Strong collaboration between universities and businesses is also helping deliver new technological and digital solutions that support business and enterprise - making the city and its surrounding sub-region a magnet for new investors from the hi-tech sectors," she says.

Examples of excellent collaboration include Bristol University's work with Toshiba on trailblazing digital telecommunications and The Centre for Fine Print Research at University of West of England's work with Hewlett Packard on new environmentally friendly water-based inks for digital art printing.

SPark, a new £300 million Science Park, was now being built on the northern edge of the city to provide a state-of-the-art home for some of the existing initiatives and encourage the growth and development of new cutting edge R&D projects and enterprises.

As well as collaborations supporting business and technology initiatives, there are many partnerships specifically supporting and informing social policy. These include the city's NESTA Futurelab project, a collaboration between local authorities, government departments, universities, the media and digital technology companies to develop new teaching tools to boost educational attainment. Both UWE and Bristol University had also been at the forefront of work with the city council to help teachers improve their classroom skills and with the National Health Service to discover new medical research tools and medical treatments.

Other partnership approaches delivering real results on the ground for local people included the city council's own award-winning work with private and independent housing providers to develop very sheltered housing for older people. Some 314 new units, combining independent living with high quality care, had already been provided as a result of the collaborative approach. The work had earned the city a Beacon Status award from the government.

"These are all exciting developments that are making a real difference to people's lives," says Cllr Janke. "Now we need to take this collaborative working on to another level. One area where such joint research and partnership working could be beneficial might be in the study of the impact of climate change on health issues, leading to new solutions that public bodies can implement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or tackle health inequalities."

Bristol will be playing two other leading roles at this week's Eurocities Conference:

Bristol is just of three European city authorities shortlisted for the annual Eurocities Award for Participation for its innovative Campaign Creator project. The winner will be known after the awards ceremony on the evening of Wednesday, November 22nd 2006. The initiative has seen the development of a "Community Campaign Pack" to encourage citizen-led, ground-up campaigning both on and offline. The pack enables citizens without access to other resources to run a credible and serious community campaign, providing a 'level the playing field' of access to the democratic process. The project was developed and delivered in partnership with a wide range of national and local

organisations and funded through the UK government's e-innovations programme. Further information at www.campaigncreator.org

Bristol will be facilitating a 'speed networking' session to share best practice with representatives of other cities. Mijanou Blech, Director of Bristol's Remix Youth Music Action Zone project, will explain how enabling young people to explore and enjoy music has boosted their creativity and is helping developing the innovative and entrepreneurial citizens of the future. Remix is based at the city council's Colston Hall venue. The project uses a range of approaches to provide music making opportunities for young people - helping them develop skills in songwriting, performance, DJ-ing, MC-ing, mixing, recording and many other aspects of the music business. Further information at www.remix-music.org.uk