

Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 13th October, 2022

MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AND REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Walsh (Chairperson);
Councillors Bower, de Faoite, Donnelly, Ferguson,
Gormley, Haire, McCabe, McCann,
McKeown, McLaughlin, Murray, Newton, Sandford, Smyth,
Spratt and Thompson.

In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Mrs. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;
Mr. T. McDonald, Emergency Coordination Officer
Ms. C. Carleton, Belfast Emergency Preparedness Group
Mr. K. Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and anti poverty
Ms. A. Diver, Climate Programme Manager
Mr. J. McKearney, Project Support Assistant;
Mr. R. Treacy, Energy and CO2 Manager
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and
Mrs. G. Boyd, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for an inability to attend were noted from Councillor Maghie.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 11th August were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st September.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Overview of multi-agency partnership approach to build community resilience in flooding hotspots by the Emergency Planning Team (Video)

The Chairperson welcomed the Emergency Coordination Officer and Claire Carleton Resilience Manager for the Belfast Emergency Preparedness Group. She explained that her role was to ensure that everyone worked in partnership and that she was also part of the Regional Community Resilience Group which was formed as a result of the Strong report in 2015/16 after flooding in the Northwest of Northern Ireland. Ms Carleton explained that the video was put together for COP 26 and that it gave an

overview of multi-agency groups that worked together to look at how they could introduce community resilience in Northern Ireland. Since that time there was a methodology developed to look at what communities they should engage with, initially targeting flooding, but over the years it had grown wider with over 17 organisations working together with around 30 community groups throughout Northern Ireland. This provided a forum to facilitate coordination, communication, consistency, capacity building and partnership working. They focused on community resilience that affected Northern Ireland. One of the outcomes of this work was the co-development of household and community emergency plans which allowed communities to manage their own local arrangements. Local groups in Belfast were formed and lead people identified who could be contacted to manage their own arrangements in an emergency. There are around 7 community resilience groups in Belfast, most of which were established around 2012/2013 on the back of severe flooding. Community resilience provided the communities with a voice.

In terms of Belfast City Council, these groups have been invaluable in terms of emergency response or flash flooding or severe weather episodes, officers had a direct link to those communities which allowed them to be more prepared and get ready for the severe weather episode. They could access their community container, forewarn neighbours, protect their properties and hopefully protect their homes. The Emergency Planning coordinator referred the Committee to another document entitled 'Building Resilience Together' which gave guidance in relation to emergency preparedness.

The Chairperson thanked the officers for their presentation and, after discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the video.

Update on Electric Vehicles Infrastructure

The Climate Commissioner referred to the report that had been circulated in advance to the Committee and said that the purpose of the report was to update Members on the current status of the Belfast City Council Electric Vehicle (EV) programme of activity and to make recommendations on next steps. She said that decisions were required in relation to the use of Belfast City Council car parks and land for the purposes of supporting EV infrastructure (EVI) in the city, and the development of an EV strategy for Belfast.

The Climate commissioner reminded Members that the ban on fossil fuel vehicle manufacture from 2030 onwards in the UK had created an increasing demand for easily accessible EV charging infrastructure in most UK cities. She continued that a network of electric vehicle infrastructure was an essential part of a shift towards zero emissions transport and achieving Belfast's aims of an 80% reduction on emissions levels by 2030. However, she advised that Belfast was currently in the bottom 20% of UK local authorities for EV charge points per person. A stretch goal of installing at least 38 EV charging devices per year in Belfast (year over a baseline of 55 EV charging devices in 2022) had been included in the draft Belfast Agenda and draft Economic Strategy. This approach was consistent with the aims of the Department for Infrastructure, with the launch of the EV Infrastructure Task-Force in December 2021.

The capital costs of EV infrastructure were high so, to accelerate the transition, the UK government had set aside £400m through the Charging Infrastructure Investment Fund for Local Government to avail of capital and revenue costs to install EV charging in residential areas that lacked off-street parking. This funding was

competitive and heavily promoted to Local Authorities, which were required to work with private sector charge point Operators (CPO) to deliver the service.

The Climate Commissioner went on to outline the various funding opportunities that were available to Belfast.

The Committee noted that officers had been approached by a number of third parties in relation to existing EVI infrastructure and potential upgrades, and supported Legal Service's suggestion that a call for expressions of interest was undertaken to test the market regarding the potential use of Council owned land to support EVI. It also noted that ESB had secured funding through the Levelling Up fund to upgrade existing EVI, and supported officers from Climate, Physical Programmes and Legal Services proceeding to negotiate terms with ESB for the continued use of the existing sites to enable continuity of service.

The Climate Commissioner outlined that an opportunity existed to bring forward three to four leisure centre sites for inclusion on an EVI reserve list within the INTERREG funded FASTER project funded by SEUPB, and supported officers progressing same. She referred Members to the recommendations in the report and asked that they support the recommendation that up to £30k be allocated from existing budget to support the development of a Belfast EV strategy.

Members agreed that given the growing size of need, the Council should be going beyond looking at installing charge points on its own land to include land owned by others, for example supermarkets and schools. While Council is a significant landowner this land is not located in residential areas where the EVI is needed.

A Member raised the need to future proof EVI so it is accessible to all and asked officers to pick this up in the EVI strategy.

A Member requested that Belfast City Council should write to the Department for Infrastructure Minister in relation to access to on street charging where off-street charging isn't an option; and to write to the Department for Communities Minister to ask for guidance for those on the mobility scheme and how they might access charging points without creating barriers on the footpaths.

The Committee agreed to this course of action.

After discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed to the recommendations as outlined.

Issues raised in advance by Members

Energy Efficiency Education Programme for citizens

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Smith proposed

"We call on Belfast City Council to develop an energy efficiency campaign to educate and inform the citizens of this city around how to conserve energy use and attempt to reduce the financial pressures households will face, during spiralling increases. We plan for this campaign to work alongside relevant partners in both government and the community sector, to maximise the strength of the messaging.

To seek to go beyond our City Matters magazine and online outlets, for a targeted approach to reach the most vulnerable and to make this information as accessible as possible”

The proposal was seconded by Councillor de Faoite and agreed by the Committee

New Ireland Forum and Citizens Assemblies

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor de Faoite proposed:

“That the Council write again to the Taoiseach’s office regarding the establishment of a New Ireland Forum for the 21st Century, alongside a series of comprehensive Citizens’ Assemblies, to examine the practical, social and economic aspects of a New Ireland.”

This was seconded by Councillor McCabe.

The Members of the Committee asked for a vote on the proposal. On the recorded vote 10 members voted for the proposal and 7 voted against the proposal and it was declared carried.

For 10	Against 7
Councillors Walsh, McKeown, de Faoite, Donnelly, Ferguson, Gormley, McCabe, McCann, McLaughlin and Smyth.	Aldermen Haire and Sandford and Councillors Bower, Murray, Newton, Spratt and Thompson.

Chairperson