



## BRCDC Council Panel

<b>Subject:</b>	Minutes of Belfast Region City Deal (BRCDC) Council Panel
<b>Date:</b>	12.30 pm, 24 February 2022
<b>Councillors in attendance:</b>	<p>Alderman Mark Cosgrove – Antrim &amp; Newtownabbey Borough Council  Councillor Julie Gilmour – Antrim &amp; Newtownabbey Borough Council  Councillor Stephen Ross – Antrim &amp; Newtownabbey Borough Council  Councillor Alistair Cathcart – Ards &amp; North Down Borough Council  Alderman Alan McDowell – Ards &amp; North Down Borough Council  Councillor Stephen Dunlop- Ards &amp; North Down Borough Council  Councillor Richard Smart - Ards &amp; North Down Borough Council  Alderman Brian Kingston – Belfast City Council  Alderman Allan Ewart – Lisburn &amp; Castlereagh City Council  Councillor Uel Mackin - Lisburn &amp; Castlereagh City Council  Alderman Billy Ashe MBE – Mid &amp; East Antrim Borough Council  Councillor Robin Stewart - Mid &amp; East Antrim Borough Council  Alderman Audrey Wales MBE - Mid &amp; East Antrim Borough Council  Councillor Charlie Casey – Newry, Mourne &amp; Down District Council  Councillor Robert Burgess - Newry, Mourne &amp; Down District Council  Councillor Pete Byrne - Newry, Mourne &amp; Down District Council</p>
<b>Officers:</b>	<p>David Burns – Chief Executive, Lisburn &amp; Castlereagh City Council  Jacqui Dixon – Chief Executive, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council  Mark Parkinson – Interim Chief Executive, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council  Ronan Cregan – Deputy Chief Executive, Belfast City Council  Damien Martin – BRCDC Programme Director, Belfast City Council  Majella McAllister – Director of Economic Development and Planning, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council  Susie McCullough – Director Regeneration, Development and Planning, Ards and North Down Borough Council  Padraic Murphy – Programme Co-ordinator, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council  Ursula O’Loughlin – Head of Economic Development, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council  Conor Mallon – Director Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council  Amanda Smyth – Head of Regeneration and Business Development, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council  Professor Paul Maropoulos, Director for Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC), Queen’s University  Emer Husbands, Theresa Slevin, Stephen Wallace, Ruth Rea, Lorraine Beggs – BRCDC Programme Office</p>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>
1.1	<p>Alderman Cosgrove welcomed the members of the BRCDC Council Panel to the meeting which was hosted by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council.</p> <p>A minute of silence was held reflecting on the death of Christopher Stalford, MLA.</p>

	<p>On behalf of the Council Panel, Alderman Cosgrove proposed to draft a letter of thanks to Suzanne Wylie, the former Chief Executive of Belfast City Council, to formally acknowledge the leadership and determination that Suzanne had demonstrated in helping make the BRCD a reality.</p> <p><b>Members agreed that a formal letter of thanks should be sent to Suzanne Wylie.</b></p> <p>Alderman Cosgrove welcomed Mark Parkinson the Interim Chief Executive for Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.</p> <p>Alderman Cosgrove outlined the key areas of focus for the meeting.</p>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Apologies</b>
2.1	<p>Apologies were received from:</p> <p>Alderman Philip Brett – Antrim &amp; Newtownabbey Borough Council  Councillor Ronan McLaughlin - Belfast City Council  Councillor Carl Whyte – Belfast City Council  Councillor Sorcha Eastwood – Lisburn &amp; Castlereagh City Council  Alderman Michael Henderson – Lisburn &amp; Castlereagh City Council  Councillor Timothy Gaston - Mid &amp; East Antrim Borough Council  Councillor Barra O’Muirí – Newry, Mourne &amp; Down District Council  Councillor Eric Hanvey - Belfast City Council</p> <p>Apologies were received from the following Officers:</p> <p>Stephen Reid – Chief Executive, Ards and North Down Borough Council  Marie Ward – Chief Executive, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council</p>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>
3.1	<p>Alderman Cosgrove asked Councillors if they had any interests to declare in relation to the agenda. No interests were declared.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Minutes of Previous Meeting</b>
4.1	<p>Alderman Cosgrove asked if the Panel agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting were an accurate reflection of the meeting.</p> <p>Ald Kingston proposed that the minutes from the last meeting were agreed.  Seconded by Cllr Burgess  <b>Members agreed the minutes.</b></p>
<b>5.0</b>	<b>BRCD Deal Signing</b>
5.1	<p>Alderman Cosgrove welcomed the signing of the Deal Document in December as a significant achievement and testament to what can be achieved by Partners working collaboratively.</p> <p>The Programme Video, as launched at the Deal signing event was shown.</p> <p>Alderman Cosgrove thanked the team for preparation of an inspirational video and requested that Cllrs have access to the video and noted the potential impact if all the Cllrs on the panel shared the video through social media.</p>

	<p>Cllr Byrne welcomed the video which demonstrated the full impact of the Deal and proposed that the video is pushed through Social Media and Council websites, to ensure the full picture of what the Deal can achieve is widely communicated.</p> <p>Alderman Ashe also welcomed the video and proposed that each Council should ensure that this is communicated and shared within their local Council areas.</p> <p>Alderman Kingston agreed with the comments from previous members and suggested that greater emphasis on the Employability and Skills pillar would be helpful to demonstrate the inclusive nature of the Deal.</p> <p>Cllr Casey noted the importance of ensuring that the public feel part of BRCD and that there is something in BRCD for everyone, which this video will help to communicate.</p> <p>Damien Martin, BRCD Programme Director, thanked members for the positive feedback and noted that the video had been used for the Deal Signing in December and is available on the BRCD website. The feedback in relation to sharing the video and including further emphasis on the Employability and Skills pillar, will be discussed at the Comms Forum later in the week and an approach to re-sharing the video agreed.</p> <p>Professor Paul Maropoulos welcomed the video and noted the importance of a co-ordinated campaign to elevate the understanding of BRCD on a local, national and international scale.</p> <p><b>Members noted the report.</b> Proposed by Cllr Casey Seconded by Alderman Wales</p>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>BRCD Programme Update &amp; Next Steps</b>
6.1	<p>Damien Martin, provided an update on the progress of the overall BRCD programme of activity and outlined the key next steps. Due to the long term nature of the programme, many of the projects are at different stages of development. However a significant number of Outline Business Cases (OBCs) have now been progressed in the Innovation, Digital, Tourism and Regeneration and Infrastructure pillars and have received Ministerial and Department of Finance approval, allowing capitalisation of costs and progression to the next stage of project delivery, including procurement and design works. In the Employability and Skills pillar, a new board has been convened and an action plan for the year ahead is being developed.</p> <p>The next steps which are required to enable funding to flow to projects, include the accountable body arrangements, monitoring and reporting arrangements, ensuring project and programme resources are in place and finalisation of Implementation Plan and Financial Plan, which will provide the baseline for measurement of progress. The Letter of Offer is required to finalise these arrangements and a first draft of the Letter of Offer Framework was received on Friday. Agreeing the Letter of Offer is the number one priority for the programme and is critical to maintain momentum and allow money to flow to projects.</p> <p>Cllr Mackin congratulated the team on the progress to date and queried the potential risks to projects which do not yet have Ministerial approval and asked for some further clarification on the Letter of Offer status.</p> <p>Damien Martin reported that the OBC process is considered as business as usual and should still progress whilst Ministers are in post. It was however, recognised that there could be a potential delay for projects which go to Ministers just before the election. It was again emphasised that the development and agreement of the Letter of Offer is a major priority and whilst an outline draft has been received, even when the full draft of the Letter of Offer has been received from the departments, it will take some time to agree as a Partnership and through the Legal and approvals process.</p>

	<p>Alderman Ewart acknowledged the £1billion of investment which is a great news story for the region, however expressed some frustration at delays encountered by the Hillsborough project as it seeks to get OBC approval.</p> <p>Damien Martin noted that the OBC process has been challenging and that a number of projects have been re-submitted following CPD cost validation to address the rising cost of inflation. The revised OBC for Hillsborough has been received and is being reviewed.</p> <p>David Burns emphasised his frustration at the bureaucracy in the process and the need to recognise that the project costs included within the OBCs are estimates at a point in time and the true project costs would not be known until Contractors are procured.</p> <p>Alderman Kingston queried how money for the projects which are progressing at a slower pace will be secured.</p> <p>Damien Martin reported that projects have a BRCD budget allocation as per the Deal Document and that any project cost overruns will have to be met by the Project Sponsor through alternate sources of funding or value engineering. This will ensure that the full budget allocation continues to be available for projects which come later in the programme.</p> <p><b>Members noted the report.</b>  Proposed by Alderman Kingston  Seconded by Alderman Ashe</p>
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Impact of Innovation Investment – example of AMIC</b>
7.1	<p>Alderman Cosgrove introduced Professor Paul Maropoulos, Director for Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC), one of the five Innovation centres of Excellence to be delivered by BRCD.</p> <p>Professor Maropoulos delivered a presentation on the AMIC project, which will be based at Global Point. The project will be a strategic partnership between the private sector, government and the universities, delivering the springboard for manufacturing innovation in NI. Crucially the investment in AMIC is at a significant scale to enable NI to be recognised globally, enabling NI companies to access global markets and showcasing NI capability.</p> <p>It comprises three facilities within the Belfast Region that will serve to bridge the gap between emerging research and industrial application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AMIC Factory of the Future is an industry-led, advanced digital manufacturing and prototyping facility to enable testing and scaling up of new technologies.</li> <li>• AMIC NIACE is an industry-led centre focused on composites technologies.</li> <li>• AMIC Campus (not-BRCD funded) serves as a bridge to university research and skills development in the University setting.</li> </ul> <p>AMIC’s primary market focus will be in the Advanced Manufacturing, Materials and Engineering (AMME) sectors of NI and will create a range of job opportunities, across the skills spectrum, from apprenticeships to PhDs. The project will be industry focused, including SMEs.</p> <p>Alderman Cosgrove thanked Professor Maropoulos for the interesting presentation and the inspiring project.</p> <p>Cllr Casey welcomed the project focus on SMEs and noted the importance of engagement with SMEs and potential opportunities in Europe and Ireland.</p>

	<p>Professor Maropoulos agreed that SMEs are very important and recognised that engaging with SMEs can be challenging, due to limited resources within the SMEs, however making ourselves available to engage with SMEs will be key.</p> <p>Alderman Cosgrove highlighted the importance of selling the story of this world class facility which will create job and opportunities across NI.</p>
<b>8.0</b>	<b>Partnership for Digital Transformation</b>
	<p>Alderman Cosgrove noted that in addition to the investment in Innovation as outlined by the example of AMIC, BRCD will also invest £125m in a challenge led, flexible digital programme. This programme will maximise the benefits and opportunities of the Innovation centres of excellence and focus on areas where the region can be distinctive and competitive.</p> <p>Ruth Rea and Majella McAlister delivered a presentation on how across the BRCD efforts to support digital transformation across the region will be achieved through investments in innovation, digital and the collaborative working of partners through the employability and skills programme.</p> <p>Ruth Rea highlighted that Employability and Skills (E&amp;S) underpins the programme of investment to maximise impact. Through the E&amp;S pillar, partners are working together to understand the skills needs arising from the BRCD investment to ensure that the skills exist to enable employment opportunities expected through the deal to be fully realized. One of the E&amp;S thematic priorities is focused upon preparing for the digital future and focuses on working with individuals and businesses to build their digital skills. In 2020 a digital task and finish project was undertaken with partners to identify the need for new interventions as a result of the pandemic but also as a way of prebuilding capacity in advance of city deal investments. The outcome of this work had led to development of new interventions which are directly aligned to support small businesses to address key inclination barriers in terms of their knowledge gap and financial barriers.</p> <p>Majella McAlister updated the Panel on two projects that have emerged from collaboration between Council partners which will support the delivery of the BRCD ambitions. The first project Digital Surge aims to address the 'knowledge' gap of digital transformation specifically focused on micro and small business and advanced digital technology. This is a collaborative project across all 11 Councils, led by Antrim and Newtownabbey and funded by Invest NI, ERDF and the Councils. The Digital Surge programme is live and Members are encouraged to make businesses in their areas aware. For more details on the programme please visit: <a href="https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/business/support-for-businesses/business-initiatives/digital-surge/">https://antrimandnewtownabbey.gov.uk/business/support-for-businesses/business-initiatives/digital-surge/</a> <a href="mailto:Gillian.hackily@gmail.com">Gillian.hackily@gmail.com</a></p> <p>The Digital Transformation Flexible Fund, was developed to address financial barriers for small business when investing in a digital transformation project. The project has secured up to £7m funding across 3 years from the City and Growth Deal Complementary Fund and DAERA. The funding is ring fenced and is dependent on development of a business case.</p> <p>Alderman Ashe welcomed the presentations delivered at today's meeting, which had brought BRCD to life and requested that copies of the slides are shared with members.</p> <p>Alderman McDowell noted that members should work together to highlight the programmes discussed at today's meeting and ensure take up across the Council areas.</p>

<b>9</b>	<b>Press Release</b>
	<p>Alderman Cosgrove asked members if they were content to agree the draft press release circulated in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>Proposed by Ald Ashe Seconded by Cllr Burgess <b>Members agreed the press release.</b></p>
<b>8.0</b>	<b>Schedule of Meetings</b>
8.1	<p>Alderman Cosgrove highlighted that a schedule of meetings has been circulated with the next meeting to be hosted by Lisburn &amp; Castlereagh City Council on 22 June 2022.</p>