



BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL

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BRCO Council Panel

Subject:	Minutes of Belfast Region City Deal (BRCO) Council Panel
Date:	12.30 pm, 28 September 2022
Councillors in attendance:	Alderman Noel Williams - The Mayor of Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Matthew Magill – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Councillor Stephen Ross – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Alderman Mark Cosgrove – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Councillor Julie Gilmour – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council Councillor Alistair Cathcart – Ards & North Down Borough Council Alderman Alan McDowell – Ards & North Down Borough Council Councillor Richard Smart - Ards & North Down Borough Council Councillor Stephen Dunlop- Ards & North Down Borough Council Councillor Michael Long- Belfast City Council Alderman Allan Ewart – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Alderman Amanda Grehan – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Alderman Michael Henderson – Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Councillor Uel Mackin - Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Alderman Billy Ashe MBE – Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Alderman Audrey Wales MBE - Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Timothy Gaston - Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Robert Logan – Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Charlie Casey – Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Councillor Pete Byrne - Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Officers:	Ronan Cregan – Deputy Chief Executive, Belfast City Council Damien Martin – BRCO Programme Director, Belfast City Council David Burns – Chief Executive, Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Valerie Watts – Interim Chief Executive, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Susie McCullough – Director Regeneration, Development and Planning, Ards and North Down Borough Council Majella McAllister – Director of Economic Development and Planning, Antrim and Newtownabbey 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 Jonathan McGrandle – City Deal Programme Director, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Paul Duffy – Head of Planning & Building Control, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Steven Walls – Head of Digital Innovation & Corporate Governance, 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 Theresa Slevin, Ruth Rea, Lorraine Beggs – BRCO Programme Office

1.0	Welcome and Introductions
1.1	<p>The Mayor of Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Alderman Noel Williams welcomed the members of the BRCD Council Panel to the meeting which was hosted by Mid & East Antrim Borough Council.</p> <p>Alderman Noel Williams outlined the key areas of focus for the meeting.</p>
2.0	Apologies
2.1	<p>Apologies were received from:</p> <p>Councillor Robin Stewart - Mid & East Antrim Borough Council Councillor Robert Burgess - Newry, Mourne & Down District Council Councillor Ronan McLaughlin - Belfast City Council Alderman George Dorrian – Belfast City Council Councillor Carl Whyte – Belfast City Council Councillor Barra O’Muirí – Newry, Mourne & Down District Council</p> <p>Apologies were received from the following Officers:</p> <p>John Walsh - Chief Executive, Belfast City Council Stephen Reid – Chief Executive, Ards and North Down Borough Council Jacqui Dixon – Chief Executive, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council Marie Ward – Chief Executive, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council</p>
3.0	Declarations of Interest
3.1	Alderman Noel Williams asked Councillors if they had any interests to declare in relation to the agenda. No interests were declared.
4.0	Minutes of Previous Meeting
4.1	<p>Alderman Noel Williams asked if the Panel agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting were an accurate reflection of the meeting.</p> <p>Alderman Audrey Wales proposed that the minutes from the last meeting were agreed. Seconded by Councillor Timothy Gaston</p> <p>Members agreed the minutes.</p>
5.0	BRCD Programme Report
5.1	<p>Damien Martin (DM) presented the programme report key points of update included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A main priority for the team is progressing contracts for funding, the first contract for Studio Ulster has been signed with Carrickfergus Regeneration and AMIC expected to be progressed imminently. Work has also commenced for on a number of other projects with business cases approved. - Innovation projects are the most developed at this time with full business cases expected at the start of the new financial year; - Digital programme is at an earlier stage of development, with the exception of the i4C project, a number of additional business cases for Digital Twin, Advanced Wireless projects are also at an advanced stage of development; - Construction inflation is a key issue for the programme, discussions have taken place with NI and UK officials to agree a position that will enable projects to proceed to enable the financial impact of construction inflation to be better understood. Confirmation was provided by NI and UK officials that no additional funding is available and mechanisms to reduce costs including value engineering will be important moving forward.

Cllr Michael Henderson queried the implication of the absence of Ministers to approve business cases and if those in progress are due to be approved in advance of the impending deadline.

DM stated that all efforts are being undertaken to progress businesses cases currently in the system, confirming that business cases can be approved without ministers, however in this scenario there is expected to be some delays in the timing of decisions.

Cllr Charlie Casey noted the positive progress that has been achieved and queried the current position of the Newry Regeneration project.

DM responded highlighting that business case approval is in place and work is ready to commence on the contract for funding.

Cllr Timothy Gaston queried:

- the issues being experienced with government departments and if there was a sense that the commitment to the deal was still present; and
- the potential to access additional funding if project costs overrun or if it expected councils will cover this.

DM stated there remains an absolute commitment to the deal and its component projects, as the first city and growth deal in Northern Ireland there are challenges associated with this and the appetite to risk of the government departments, linked to key issues such as construction inflation. Confirmation has been provided by government officials that no additional funding is available, responsibility for cost overruns remain at a project level. Whilst opportunities may emerge for other funding opportunities in the future, projects may need to consider value engineering which will have a knock-on impact on benefits.

Cllr Billy Ashe queried when the contract for funding would be received for the Carrickfergus Regeneration project.

DM stated that two contracts are required, the first between DfC and BCC, following which a contract will be drafted between BCC and MEA. Feedback from DfC has indicated that the initial contract will be received imminently following which the contract to MEA will be drafted and issued.

Cllr Robert Logan queried if there was anything that Councils could do to encourage departments to move at pace.

DM flagged the opportunity of elected members to engage through party colleagues to encourage momentum and highlighted the possibility of an event to re-energise support for the deal.

Cllr Mark Cosgrove highlighted the specific construction inflation risk to the AMIC project and the financial implication of this upon Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council, shouldering this risk with project partners. Majella McAlister further elaborated stressing the impact of delays which could erode the relevance of projects to the business community.

DM echoed the points raised highlighting through the example of Studio Ulster the risk of not progressing at pace, with the implication being that productions would be lost to the NI market.

Cllr Audrey Wales highlighted frustrations as to the pace of progress of city deals in NI in comparison with other parts of the UK and the resulting risk of delays devaluing the investment.

Cllr Michael Henderson queried the casework date for the Royal Hillsborough project. DM confirmed the Programme Management Office is pressing officials for casework date to be confirmed urgently.

Members noted the report.

6.0	Impact of Digital Investment: i4C at St Patrick's Barracks, Ballymena
6.1	<p>A presentation was delivered by Valerie Watts and Jonathan McGrandle providing an overview of the three investment projects led by Mid & East Antrim Borough Council. The presentation focused upon the investment through the digital pillar to support the delivery of the i4C innovation and clean technology centre for SMEs. It was highlighted that i4C will serve as the anchor tenant building in the 15-hectare mixed regeneration of St Patrick's Barracks which is situated in the heart of Ballymena and will act as a catalyst and enabler of inclusive growth in Ballymena and the wider borough.</p> <p>Following the presentation Cllr Alan McDowell queried the confidence in achieving occupancy rates to cover operating costs.</p> <p>Ursula O'Loughlin responded noting the significant interest in the existing small incubator space at the councils EKOS facility and synergy with the work of the Manufacturing Task Force with clear areas of opportunity particularly around the clean tech supply chain.</p>
7.0	Integrating Social Value into BRCD Contracts
7.1	<p>Ruth Rea provided an update to members on the work undertaken to ensure that social value will be integrated into the tender process for BRCD procurements and to outline the plans to then ensure that social value benefits are ultimately delivered by the successful contractor.</p> <p>Alderman Alan McDowell requested a copy of the slides presented and referenced the shortage in skilled labour being experienced in the construction sector, particularly vocational skills and the need to change perceptions of parents on vocational pathways. Querying how can contractors be supported to help them fulfil their social value contributions.</p> <p>RR responded highlighting the challenging recruitment market businesses will continue to face due to restricted labour force growth and falling levels of migrant labour. The skills assessment process being undertaken through the Employability & Pillar will help to identify particular areas of constraint, there is a key opportunity to work with Councils via their Labour Market Partnerships, with FE College and University partners to ensure we target effort accordingly including in key areas such as apprenticeships and Higher-Level Apprenticeships.</p> <p>DM reinforced the partnership potential of the deal, ensuring there is connectivity of support across the skills system from lower to higher level skills, recognising that the city deal will provide opportunities across all levels.</p>
8	Press Release
	<p>Alderman Noel Williams asked members if they were content to agree the draft press release circulated in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>Members agreed the press release.</p>
9.0	Date of next meetings
9.1	<p>Alderman Noel Williams highlighted that a schedule of meetings has been circulated with the next meeting to be hosted by Newry Mourne & Down District Council on 25 January 2023.</p>