

# Social Policy Working Group

Tuesday, 13th February, 2024

## MEETING OF THE SOCIAL POLICY WORKING GROUP

HELD IN THE CONOR ROOM AND  
REMOVED VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor Doherty (Chairperson); and  
Councillor R. McLaughlin.

In attendance: Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of  
Corporate Services;  
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;  
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources;  
Ms. N. Bohill, Head of Commercial and Procurement  
Services;  
Ms. C. Christy, HR Manager (Development);  
Mr. C. Campbell, Divisional Solicitor;  
Mr. K. Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti Poverty;  
Ms. C. Hutchinson, Strategic Planning and Policy Officer;  
Ms. S. O'Regan, Employability and Skills Manager;  
Ms. C. Patterson, Policy and Programme Manager,  
Inclusive Growth;  
Mr. K. Quinn, Employability and Skills Officer;  
Ms. M. Robinson, Belfast Business Promise Programme  
Co-Ordinator;  
Mr. J. Uprichard, Business, Research and Development  
Manager; and  
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland and from Councillors  
McAteer and Smyth.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 14th November, 2023 were approved by the  
Working Group.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were reported.

### **Item Withdrawn from Agenda**

The Committee noted that agenda item 5 - Social Value Procurement Policy/Ethical Framework had been withdrawn from the agenda, as it would instead be considered by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

### **Actions Update**

The Working Group noted the contents of a report providing information on those actions which were now complete and those which were still ongoing.

### **Building an Inclusive Labour Market – Research highlights and proposed next steps**

The Employability and Skills Manager submitted for the Working Group's consideration the following report:

#### **1.0 Purpose of Report**

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Working Group on research that was recently commissioned on economic inactivity and inclusive labour market issues in Belfast and Northern Ireland and to note next steps on this work.**

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

- Note that research recently undertaken by Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC) on inclusive labour market issues in Belfast and Northern Ireland**
- Note the recent conference on this issue that took place in Ulster University on 22 January 2024**
- Note the ongoing engagement with partners across the community and voluntary, statutory and private sectors to maintain momentum and develop shared solutions to effect change in this area of persistent challenge.**

#### **3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 At the 14 November 2023 meeting of the Social Policy Working Group, officers provided an oral update on a research piece that had recently commenced. The purpose of the research was to build an understanding of the scale and scope of the economic inactivity challenge in Belfast and Northern Ireland, and to begin to identify potential policy responses to this area of persistent challenge.**

**3.2 The research was undertaken by UUEPC. It aimed to provide answers to the questions: 'Economic inactivity: who, what, where and why?'. The research was presented at a**

conference in Ulster University's Belfast campus on 22 January 2024. The conference attracted more than 200 representatives across the public, private and statutory sectors. Those in attendance heard from a range of keynote speakers in this field and took part in breakout sessions on issues such as; Future Challenge for Frontline Welfare and Advice; Joining Up the Skills and Employment Services; Resourcing the Solution and Health and Employment Services – Working Together?

- 3.3 This conference was positioned as the start of a conversation on the issue – as opposed to trying to resolve all outstanding challenges on the day. Our conference partners NICVA (Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action) have now taken up the mantle and are planning to organise a follow-up event with their members in mid-February 2024, followed by a wider event in the coming months.
- 3.4 While Belfast City Council does not have any statutory remit in this space, the research pointed to the disproportionately large number of economically inactive residents in some parts of the city – and the associated social cohesion challenges that this can create. It also identified the need for targeted interventions and specific support to deliver on the council ambitions around inclusive growth.
- 3.5 One key issue that emerged in the discussion is that the term 'economically inactive' is an administrative one that can have pejorative connotations. In our work with employers, we focus our language on finding them talent from sources that have previously been overlooked – and that can add value to their business.
- 3.6 An overview of the research is attached, including the presentation that was shared on the day. Key highlights for members' information include:
- Around 303,000 individuals across the region are categorised as 'economically inactive'. The figure in Belfast is around 70,000
  - Economic inactivity rates vary from council area to council area. Derry City and Strabane has the highest overall levels of inactivity, followed by Belfast
  - The term 'economically inactive' involves a range of categories – all of whom have different needs and therefore require different approaches and support. The main categories are students (sometimes excluded from the figures presented given that they are spending time studying to improve their opportunities to find a job); looking after family and home; sick; retired
  - The most significant changes in the number of economically inactive over recent decades has come

about as a result of more females joining the labour market. However those figures have plateaued in more recent years

- A much more significant proportion of those who are economically inactive are likely to have no or low skills than those who are in the labour market. The level of demand for low-skilled jobs has decreased over recent decades and looks set to fall further
- Demographic changes (more people retiring early; decreases in population numbers) mean that labour markets will become increasingly tight. This underlines the need to stem the flow of people into economic inactivity (particularly young people) and also to look at new support systems of scale for helping people back towards work. This is likely to mean changes in thinking from an employer perspective (ways of recruiting; flexible terms and conditions etc.) and a changing approach to support services to provide outreach and engagement over a longer-term if required to help people move back or towards the world of work.

**3.7** The research positioned a number of policy discussions that will require further consideration. These include:

- **Plan for participation:** inclusive labour markets are an economic necessity in the wake of labour market shortages and demographic challenges. Business and policy must plan and prepare
- **Greater levels of partnerships:** complex multi-layered challenges require co-ordinated cross-departmental, third sector and businesses-led solutions. This will include bringing all ecosystems together to agree on strategic priority groups and required approaches and investing in a shared understanding of the problem, based on evidence
- **Sharing what works:** are there effective small-scale interventions that could be scaled up? Are there businesses out there having success with employing people previously inactive, and what can we learn from those?
- **Inclusivity from employers:** success will be linked to how well employers can adapt an openness to inclusivity in their workforces (hiring practices, flexibility in roles – part-time, qualifications required for the job). It is clear that this is increasingly important for employees and potential employees when considering a possible place to work
- **Ebbing the flow of people becoming unemployed and economically inactive is vital to reducing the stock – this points to the need for early interventions – preventative approach**

- Retaining older workers is critical for maintaining both volume and talent. To do this, employers will need to consider issues such as flexible conditions, hybrid working, reduced hours and part-time working
- Employers will need to invest in supporting well-being in work (early intervention/continual contact with temporary sick, 'right to return', access to occupational health etc).
- Benefit systems: the current system can act as a deterrent to people finding work. Research shows that a system that encourages participation, where individuals are signposted to services if they report a desire to work (e.g. job opportunities, upskilling, working experience, general labour market support), removing fear of loss of benefit – would improve engagement levels
- Localised/targeted interventions: economic inactivity doesn't impact everyone, everywhere to the same extent. Localised, targeted interventions will be important to support those areas with entrenched concentrations.

**3.8** Members will be aware that the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) – the UK Government fund which replaced EU Structural Funds such as ESF and ERDF – has been used to fund 18 organisations that are supporting economically inactive individuals to move towards work. The funding for these projects will end in March 2025. It is therefore critical that the shared conversation on this issue continues throughout this year, in order to identify and resource sustainable solutions that will make a positive impact on this long-standing challenge.

**3.9** **Financial and Resource Implications**

No specific financial or resource implications at this point. This work will be led by the Employability and Skills team within Belfast City Council. Reporting will be through the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

**3.10** **Equality or Good Relations Implications/  
Rural Needs Assessment**

As the research identifies, some groups are more adversely impacted by this issue than others. Any future funding intervention will have to involve an equality impact assessment.”

The Working Group noted the contents of the report.

## **Social Value Procurement Policy - Delivery Report**

The Head of Commercial and Procurement Services submitted for the Working Group's consideration the following report:

### **1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**

To update the Social Policy Working Group 'SPWG' on the delivery of social value outcomes via open tender competitions awarded in accordance with the Council's Social Value Procurement Policy 'SVPP'

The report also provides an update on tenders awarded by Property & Projects department where, due to project funding rules, social value has been considered and included in accordance with the CPD Buy Social Model.

At the last SPWG meeting in November 23 Members asked that further consideration is given to the inclusion of social value in STA contract awards. An update on progress regarding this has been provided in section 4.0 of this report.

### **2.0 Background**

The SVPP was approved by Committee in April 22 with a 'Go Live' date of 1st June 2022.

A copy of the SVPP can be found here - [Social Value Procurement Policy \(belfastcity.gov.uk\)](https://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/social-value-procurement-policy)

SVPP applied to any new applicable open tender exercises with approval dated from 1st June 22.

To help Officers and suppliers understanding the SVPP and how to apply this to applicable tender competitions, the Commercial and Procurement Services 'CPS' team has developed:

- Online guidance on interlink which takes Officers through key considerations in line with the SVPP. This guidance was developed and communicated to Officers ahead of the 'Go Live' date in June 22.
- A new Supplier Guidance document was launched in September 23 which includes step by step guidance for suppliers in how to offer social value as part of their tender and how their social value offers are evaluated (new innovative approach). This was developed taking on board key learnings since the SVPP was launched in June 22.
- Social value evaluation training based on the new approach developed from September 2023. This is being rolled out during October 23 to January 24.

A link has been provided below to the interlink guidance (within the link you can access the guidance which should open as a Microsoft Sway document)

[Social value procurement guidance now available \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

It is planned the Supplier Guidance will be available on the Councils' website but want to ensure it is fully tested with the suppliers and gather feedback before doing so. Currently available as a PDF document with tenders.

As outlined in the guidance to Officers application of the SVPP is considered in 2 key parts:

**Part 1** – For all tender competitions valued over £30k, consideration by Officers about whether to:

1. Reserve the tender competition to a social enterprise/ VCSE sector taking into consideration levels of market competition in this sector
2. Include organisational behaviours (i.e., ethical procurement, environmental and HR policies and procedures) taking into consideration relevance of these policies and procedures to the goods, services or works being purchased and relevance to the market. When selected for inclusion in the tender these social value organisational behaviours are mandatory pass/fail questions for suppliers to demonstrate rather than scored questions.

**Part 2** – the inclusion of a social value weighting (10% or 15%) and scoring for tenders valued:

- over £250k for tenders pre-April 23
- over £30k for tenders post-April 23

The social value offer made by suppliers using the list of social value initiatives and points is then evaluated and scored with a minimum scoring threshold required to be met.

Note from April 23 for all tender competitions valued over £30k the following be included (in addition to the above in Part 1):

- Payment of the Real Living Wage by suppliers to their employees
- The prohibited use of zero hours contracts by suppliers

The above post April 23 changes will be implemented on a phased approach from April 23 and applied to any new

applicable open tender exercises with approval dated from 1st April 23.

### **CPD Buy Social Model**

The CPD Buy Social Model is applied where external central government funding of 50% or greater is provided for a capital/works project managed by Property & Projects.

Further information on the CPD Buy Social Model can be found here:

[PPN 01/21 - Scoring Social Value | Department of Finance \(finance-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/ppn-01/21-scoring-social-value)

[Social Value - \(buysocialni.org\)](https://buysocialni.org)

The CPD Buy Social Model is broadly similar to the Council's SVPP in terms of achieving the social value outcomes. See comparison table set out in Annexe 1 (see below at end of report) which provides an overview of the similarities/differences in key areas.

## **2.0 Reporting Period**

It is intended that this report will be provided every 2 months in line with scheduled SPWG meetings.

This report covers the Reporting Period 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 (3 months due to rescheduling of SPWG meetings).

## **3.0 Main report**

Appendix 1 of this report set out details of tenders valued over £30k which have been awarded during the Reporting Period and associated SVPP data/information

Appendix 1 includes:

### **Table 1 - Tenders awarded during Reporting Period**

This sets out details of tenders awarded during Reporting Period and whether SVPP was applied or not.

For ease of reporting this shows tenders awarded by Commercial and Procurement Services 'CPS' team and the Property & Projects department.

### **Table 2 – Summary of key data and findings associated with application of SVPP**



This shows a summary of key findings from the tenders set out in Table 1; in particular a summary of the Part 1 SVPP considerations i.e. reserved contracts and social value organisational behaviours.

### **Table 3 - Summary of Supplier's Social Value Offers (Evaluated submissions)**

This shows a summary of the tenders that included a social value weighting (10/ 15%) and the social value offers put forward by suppliers for evaluation as explained under Part 2.

A summary of each applicable tender has been set out in the table.

### **Lessons Learned and Continuous Improvement**

A Social Value Review Team has been established to review how the SVPP is being implemented and any lessons learned that need to be applied following conclusion of tender competitions. Areas the team are currently reviewing include, but not limited to:

1. Trends in the use of Reserved Contracts and any further guidance required for Officers on when these should be used
2. Trends in the selection of Social Value Organisational Behaviours by Officers when using the Social Value Toolkit and any further guidance required for Officers on when these should be applied
3. The quality of social value offers by suppliers (the evaluated submissions) and if further guidance is required in terms of how these are evaluated by Officers. In addition any further guidance required for suppliers to improve their understanding BCC expectations in line with Belfast Agenda aims and associated strategies.

The Social Value Review Team will meet every 2 months in line with scheduled SPWG meetings and the production of this report.

The content/ format of this report will be reviewed with further information included as more social value data becomes available i.e. social value delivery by suppliers using SIB reporting database.

#### **4.0 Including social value in STA contracts**

At the last SPWG meeting in November 23 Members asked that further consideration is given to the inclusion of social value in STA contract awards.

Following consideration, it is proposed that the inclusion of social value is considered as part of the current >£30k STA process. This process to include:-

- **Social value to be included in all STAs unless sound rationale presented as part of the approvals process i.e. 'Opt out'. Although this rationale will develop over time this may include:**
  - **Proprietary equipment where the economic balance sits more with the supplier e.g. BCC require Microsoft products whereas Microsoft do not require BCC spend.**
  - **Urgent requirements**
- **Rationale for opting out documented and approved on tender initiation request 'TIR' form which includes scrutiny/ challenge by CPS Strategic Category Manager; and approval by Head of CPS, City Solicitor and Chief Officer.**

Applying the SVPP to STAs will be broadly similar to a normal competitive procurement with Officers still using the SV Toolkit; however, as STAs are not evaluated the same as a competitive procedure (i.e. with quality, social value and cost % weightings) associated templates, guidance and training for Officers will need to be adapted to suit. CPS will be working on this in the coming weeks.

## **5.0 Summary**

Members of the SPWG are asked to consider the content of this report and provide feedback (positive or negative) on the data/ information contained in this report and how the SVPP is being applied.

This feedback can then be considered by the Social Value Review Team and associated guidance updated for Officers and suppliers when applying the SVPP.

In addition Members are asked to endorse the proposed approach to include social value in STA contracts going forward.”

### **Appendices Appendix 1**

**Table 1 - Tenders awarded during Reporting Period**

**Table 2 – Summary of key data and findings associated with application of SVPP**

**Table 3 - Summary of Supplier's Social Value Offers (Evaluated submissions)**

## **Annexe 1 – Comparison between BCC’s SVPP and CPD Buy Social Model**

<b>Key Criteria</b>	<b>BCC SVPP Approach</b>	<b>CPD Buy Social Model Approach</b>
Consideration of Reserved Contracts	Mandatory consideration with rationale document for inclusion/exclusion noted in Social Value Toolkit	Mandatory consideration but no further guidance provided about when to reserve.
Social Value Organisational Behaviours	See comparison table below	See comparison table below
Social value weighting	<p>Applied to all applicable tenders valued over £250k (goods, services and work) from June 22 and £30k from April 23.</p> <p>Social value weighting determined by cost criteria for tender i.e.</p> <p>If cost criteria is &gt;50% then social value weighting is 10%</p> <p>If cost criteria is ≤50% then social value weighting is 15%</p>	<p>Applied to above threshold tenders (applicable Public Contracts Regulations) for services and works. Supplies not included.</p> <p>For local government this means application to tenders valued above:</p> <p>£170k (approx.) for services contracts</p> <p>£4.3m (approx.) for works contracts</p> <p>Social value weighting 10%, rising to 20% from June 23 (subject to review/ approval)</p>
Minimum Social Value scoring threshold	<p>If 10% social value weighting then minimum 7% out 10% required</p> <p>If 15% social value weighting then minimum 11% out 15% required</p> <p>Suppliers who fail to meet this threshold are excluded from award of tender.</p>	Not included
Real Living Wage	Mandatory from April 23	Mandatory requirement
Prohibited use of zero hours contracts	Mandatory from April 23	Not included

Social Value Organisational Behaviours comparison

<b>BCC SVPP Approach</b>	<b>CPD Buy Social Model Approach</b>
<p>BCC currently include the following requirements as mandatory for all suppliers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Compliance with the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998</li> <li>2. Compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015</li> <li>3. Prompt payment of suppliers/ supply chains</li> </ol> <p>Using the Social Value Toolkit (as explained under Part 1) Officers then consider the inclusion of the following social value organisational behaviours in the tender:</p> <p><u>1. Ethical Procurement and Fair Treatment of the Supply Chain</u></p> <p>Suppliers are to demonstrate they have a procurement policy and/or corporate social responsibility policy which clearly sets out the supplier’s commitment to ethical procurement practices and fair treatment of your supply chain including associated training/ communication to staff.</p> <p><u>2. Environmental Management Systems</u></p> <p>Suppliers are to demonstrate they have an environmental management system in place i.e. ISO14001 or equivalent.</p> <p><u>3. Single Use Plastics Policy</u></p> <p>Suppliers are to demonstrate they have a single use plastics ‘SUP’ policy which clearly sets out the supplier’s commitment to managing and reducing the use of SUP in their business operations including associated training/ communication to staff.</p> <p><u>4. Donating/ Recycling equipment to the VCSE sector</u></p>	<p>From the 1 September 2021 the following requirements are mandatory;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. compliance with relevant employment, equality and health and safety law and human rights standards;</li> <li>2. adherence to relevant collective agreements; and</li> <li>3. adoption of fair work practices for all workers engaged in the delivery of the contract.</li> </ol>

Suppliers are to demonstrate they have a policy in place which clearly sets out their commitment to supporting the VCSE sector through donating/ recycling equipment (e.g. ICT equipment)

5. Equality and Diversity Policy

Suppliers are to demonstrate they have an equality and diversity policy and/or relevant HR policy which clearly sets out their commitment to equality and diversity in the workplace including associated training/ communication to staff.

7. Development, Health and Wellbeing of Employees

Suppliers are to demonstrate their commitment to the development, health and wellbeing of their employees by providing at least 3 of the following points i) to v):

- i) evidence that employees are offered fair and equitable terms of employment including sick pay, holidays, pension and set working hours;
- ii) evidence of having a learning and development policy in place which shows commitment to the personal and career development of your employees;
- iii) evidence of having in place employee appraisal procedures in place including regular employment engagement;
- iv) evidence of offering employees flexible working to support a healthy work life balance i.e. flexible working hours or working from home option;
- v) evidence of having in place policies/ initiatives to support the mental and physical health of your employees e.g. offer employee counselling services or occupation health support service.

The Working Group noted the contents of the report.

## **Employability Update**

The Director of Human Resources provided the Working Group with an update on the Council's employability activity, this included a summary of the activity this year to date, within the context of the Council's Inclusive Growth Strategy:

The Members were reminded that the Council had committed to ring-fencing entry-level posts, where there was a high volume of posts to be filled, and it supported this through the provision of appropriate pre recruitment training programmes to benefit those furthest removed from the labour market.

The Director detailed that, as part of the current recruitment campaign to fill several General Operative vacancies and create a list of reserve candidates, 9 posts (25% of the permanent vacancies) had been ring fenced to candidates eligible to complete a pre recruitment training programme. Corporate HR had worked with the Employability and Skills team in the Place and Economy Department to deliver the programme to participants nominated by the Council's employability partner, Workforce.

She detailed that the eligibility criteria of the programme was as follows:

- must live in Belfast (except the four nominations ringfenced to disability organisations);
- must meet the employee specification for the job they will be applying for; and
- must have been unemployed or economically inactive for at least 6 months or work less than 16 hours a week.

The programme had been held from 19th to 24th January, it had comprised of classroom-based learning which included guidance on how to complete the application form and two days of work experience on the job. Nine out of 19 nominated participants had completed the programme. She advised that mock interviews were taking place today, 13th February, immediately prior to the proper interviews on 14th and 15th February 2024.

### **Support for agency workers**

The Members were advised that, in addition, job application and interview skills training had been offered to all agency workers currently engaged in the General Operative role. A total of 73 had attended the full training course with 2 attending the mock interview element only.

### **Participation in the JobStart Scheme**

The Members noted that, following the success of the JobStart Scheme delivered in 2021/22, funding had been made available to the DfC through the Northern Ireland Office's New Deal Funding Initiative for a new JobStart Scheme.

To engage in the programme, the Council must ensure that:

- opportunities offered must not replace existing or planned vacancies or cause existing employees, apprentices or contractors to lose or reduce their employment;
- job opportunities must last for 6 months, with a possible extension to 9 months for those who meet certain criteria;
- job opportunities must pay at least the National Minimum Wage through PAYE; and
- Employers must develop a training plan to assist participants to gain new occupational and employability skills.

**To participate in the programme the young person must be:**

- 16-24 years old and on benefits;
- Be at risk of long-term unemployment or struggling to obtain employment;
- Be currently unemployed; and
- Have been allocated a National Insurance number providing them with “the right to work in NI”.

The Director reported that, it was anticipated that 9 JobStart vacancies would be advertised the week commencing 12th February 2024, with a view to making appointments to the scheme to successful candidates in April.

She then provided an overview of the other employability support and outreach delivered since 1st April 2023, as follows:

Job fairs and schools/universities support

- Attendance at 10 careers fairs (one targeted at people with disabilities);
- The delivery of 5 mock interview events at schools;
- The delivery of an employability talk for a disability organisation; and
- Noted that attendance at a further 3 careers fairs was scheduled for February and March 2024.

In addition, the Employability and Skills Unit, Place and Economy Department had organised a job fair in the City Hall on 17th January to promote current vacancies across City and Neighbourhood Services and Property and Projects and to promote the benefits of working for the Council. Both Corporate HR and departmental operational staff had also attended. It was noted that this event had been very well attended and it was hoped that it would have an impact on the number of applications received for difficult to fill posts.

The Director also advised that the Council was currently facilitating placements across the Council on an ongoing basis in conjunction with disability organisations, Belfast Metropolitan College, schools and both universities.

The Members were reminded that during May/June 2023, as part of Combined HGV/LGV Driver recruitment, the Council had delivered 2 information sessions at Duncrue for potential applicants which included the opportunity to register for mock interviews. In addition, in September 2023, Corporate HR had engaged with participants at a Place and Economy Transport Academy information session regarding the Council's recruitment process and the benefits of working for Belfast City Council.

The Director thanked the Council's Marketing and Communications Section for the key role it had played in assisting with the promotion and advertising of recruitment opportunities and employability outreach opportunities using a variety of communication channels.

Both Members welcomed the progress made and the impressive recruitment numbers but noted that there was likely to be a high turnover in these roles.

Following a query regarding the timescale for the introduction of apprenticeship scheme, the Director advised that a report on this matter was scheduled to be submitted to the February meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

The Working Group noted the update provided.

### **Belfast Business Promise Update**

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Belfast Business Promise Programme Co-Ordinator provided the Working Group with an update on Belfast Business Promise, which included the next steps for the Initiative, as follows:

- A Soft Launch and Celebration event to be held on 11th April 2024, with the Lord Mayor and Chairperson of the SPWG, Councillor Doherty, in attendance;
- Third Technical Panel (March 2024), with quarterly panels scheduled for 2024/25, including P3: Protect our environment;
- To provide support for P3: Protect our environment;
- Programme of Promise Learning Days to be developed for 2024/25;
- Recruitment of E&BG Officer;
- Comms plan currently to be developed for 2024/25;
- Further development of the website to enhance visibility / share resources across BBP Network;
- Business engagement ongoing; and
- Presence at partner events to continue – Future Flexible 2024.

The Working Group noted the update provided.



### **Inclusive Growth Index and Toolkit (Verbal Update)**

The Strategic Planning and Policy Officer provided the Working Group with a verbal update on the plans for piloting the draft Inclusive Growth Toolkit over the next 2 to 3 months, along with details regarding the proposed next steps regarding the further development of the Inclusive Growth Index.

She advised that the suggested pilots included:

- Belfast Stories;
- Girdwood Indoor Sports Facility;
- Sustainable Food, focusing on food poverty;
- A community based pilot to be agreed with City and Neighbourhood Services officers; and
- A pilot to be agreed with an Inclusive Innovation focus.

She explained that the next stage of the development of the Index was to assign the scoring and weighting mechanism and then build the dashboard. A meeting had been held with Digital Services to agree timescales and to ensure alignment with other corporate frameworks.

The officer concluded by advising that the Toolkit, once tested and amended, would be supported by a capacity building programme for officers to further embed its use across the Council. The aspiration was to share the Toolkit and Index with the Council's other partners to encourage them to adopt similar practices.

The Working Group noted the update provided.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

The Working Group noted that its next scheduled meeting was 16th April, 2024.

Chairperson