

East Belfast Area Working Group

Thursday, 7th March, 2024

HYBRID MEETING OF EAST BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillor Flynn (Chairperson);
Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor and Rodgers;
Councillors Bower, R. Brooks, de Faoite,
P. Donnelly, S. Douglas, Ferguson, Hanvey,
Maghie, F. McAteer, McCormick, McMullan and Smyth.

In attendance: Mr. D. Logan, Programme Delivery Manager;
Ms. K. Watters, Neighbourhood Services Integration Manager;
Mr. C. McCann, Lead Officer - Community Provision; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor D. Douglas.

Minutes

The Working Group agreed that the minutes of the meeting of 30th November were an accurate record of proceedings.

Declarations of Interest

In relation to Item 5 – Request to Present – Hanwood Trust, Councillor S. Douglas declared an interest in that he was a Board Member of the organisation and left the meeting while the item was under consideration.

Physical Programme Update

The Programme Delivery Manager presented the following report to the Working Group:

“1. Introduction

The Council’s Physical Programme covers projects under a range of funding streams including the Capital Programme, the Leisure Transformation Programme, the Local Investment Fund (LIF), the Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF); in addition, the programme covers projects that the Council is delivering on behalf of other agencies. This report outlines the status of projects under the Physical Programme.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the physical programme update for East Belfast, and;
- Note the proposed site visits to two NRF Stage 2 Projects - Dundela Football, Athletic and Social Club - Development of sporting hub at Wilgar Park, and East Belfast Mission - Hosford Community Homes

3. Local Investment Fund

LIF is a £9m fixed programme of capital investment in non-council neighbourhood assets, over two tranches: LIF 1 (2012-2015) - £5m total funding pot, allocated across each AWG areas; and LIF 2 (2015 -2019) - £4m allocation with the East being allocated £1.127m under LIF1 and £1.2m under LIF2.

Each LIF project proposal is taken through a Due Diligence process prior to any funding award. The table below outlines funding spend to date for each tranche, at key stages of the delivery process: 22 projects received In Principle support under LIF1 and LIF2, of which 19 have been completed and 2 projects are at due diligence stage.

| LIF breakdown – East | LIF 1 | | LIF 2 | |
|---|-----------|-------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Stage/ Description | Projects | Amount/ Value (£) | Projects | Amount/ Value (£) |
| Number of Projects Completed | 8 (80%) | £931,902 | 12 (100%) | £1,161,589 |
| Number of Projects in Delivery | | | | |
| Number of Projects in Pre-construction | | | | |
| Number of Projects at Initial Stage (Due Diligence) | 2 (20%) | £100,000 | | |
| Total Number of Approved Projects | 10 | £1,031,902 | 12 | £1,161,589 |

The table below provides an overview of progress and actions around the remaining live projects.

| Ref | Project | Funding | Stage | Status | Action / Recommendation |
|--------|---|--|---------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| ELIF31 | Bloomfield FC, Clonduff FC, East Belfast FC and Glentoran Academy, Tullycarnet, Cregagh Wanderers, Nettlefield Multi-Sports and Bredagh GAC – | £65,000 (£30k plus £35k reallocation) | Due Diligence | Phase 1 – Bloomfield FC, East Belfast FC, Tullycarnet FC and Cregagh Wanderers projects, including the Cregagh toilet facility have been signed off at Due Diligence. Containers have been delivered to Tullycarnet and Bloomfield. Cregagh ground work is complete and | Continue engagement with the groups |

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|--------|--------------------|---------|---------------|--|--|
| | storage facilities | | | <p>delivery of container and toilet is due to be complete by mid March. Awaiting signed funding agreement from East Belfast FC.</p> <p>Phase 2 - Bredagh is ready for consideration by the Due Diligence Group in March. Some information is still outstanding from the remaining groups including landowner permissions for Glentoran and Nettlefield Multi-sports. Updated DD information will be required from Clonduff FC once the location of the proposed container has been agreed.</p> | |
| ELIF29 | Cycling Ireland | £70,000 | Due Diligence | Due diligence stage ongoing. Project design and licence arrangements in discussion and to be confirmed. | Continue engagement with the group and key stakeholders. |

4. Belfast Investment Fund

Members are reminded BIF is a £28m investment fund for regeneration partnership projects, with a minimum £250,000 investment from Council. In East Belfast 9 projects have received an In-Principle funding commitment under BIF. There are 5 projects on the longer BIF list. Each of the In Principle projects are taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place. The table below provides a summary of BIF allocated projects i.e. project stage; project title; and the funding allocated.

Summary of BIF allocated projects:

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|------------|---|
| East | <p>Stage 3—Willowfield—£560k; H&W Welders—£2.37m; Strand—£1.5m; Bloomfield—£440k</p> <p>Stage 2—Lagan Village Youth & Community—no commitment</p> <p>Stage 1—East Belfast Mission; Belmont Bowling Club; Bloomfield Presbyterian Church; St. John's Orangefield, Church of Ireland, Tullycarnet Community Support Services—no commitment / on long list</p> |
| Outer East | <p>Stage 3 —TAGIT- £434k; Hanwood—£396k; Lisnasharragh Community Schools—£398k; Braniel—£390k; Castlereagh</p> |

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| | Presbyterian Church—£382k |
|--|---------------------------|

The table below provides an overview of the remaining projects. Members are asked to note the actions and recommendations.

| Ref | Project | Funding | Stage | Status | Action/ Recommendation |
|-------|----------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| BIF12 | Strand Arts Centre | £6,940,069 Comprising: LUF £4m BIF £1,550,000 HF £255,000 (Development Grant), £768,069 (Delivery Grant) | Stage 3 – procurement stage | The application to HF for Delivery funding has been successful. Discussions with DfC on potential funding are also continuing. The project is at RIBA Stage 4. Preparation for contractor procurement is underway with appointment expected by Spring 2024. | Continue engagement with the group. |
| BIF13 | Bloomfield Community Association | £715,009 Comprising £440,000 plus reallocations of £60,009 and £215,000 | Stage 3 - Committed – In Principle | <i>[No change]</i> . The Group is continuing to actively explore additional funding opportunities to meet the shortfall estimated at approx. £100k as of June 2023. An application to DfC has been submitted but no funds are available at present. | Continue engagement with the group. |

Outer East BIF Projects

| Ref | Project | Funding | Stage | Status | Action/ Recommendation |
|-------|---------------------------------|----------|-------------------------|---|---|
| BIF38 | Castlereagh Presbyterian Church | £382,000 | Stage 3 – Due Diligence | Due Diligence preparation has been carried out – the information has been collated and will be considered in March. | Continued engagement with group and progress through Due Diligence. |

5. Social Outcomes Fund

SOF is £4m ringfenced capital investment programme with a focus on local community tourism projects. There is one project under SOF for East Belfast - Eastside Visitor Centre – with an In-Principle funding commitment. Similar to BIF, all projects are subject to Due Diligence process prior to any funding award.

| Project | SOF Award | Status and update |
|--|-----------|--|
| Eastside Visitor Centre <i>Link to UV project</i> | £700,000 | <i>Business case stage.</i> Partner project with Urban Villages. The project proposal is for the extension of the existing visitor centre at C.S. Lewis Square. Funding gap identified. Status remains as reported previously - Final draft business case completed and remains with Executive Office. |

6. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund is a £10m capital fund to help groups deliver capital projects that will make a real, long-term difference in their communities. £2.2m was allocated to East Belfast and 6 projects are now Stage 2- Development. Each project is taken through a 3-stage approval process, including a rigorous Due Diligence process before any Funding Agreement is approved and put in place.

East Belfast – NRF overview

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|------|--|
| East | Stage 2 - Eastside Container Hotel, Impact Belfast, Nevin Spence Centre Visitor Experience, Portview Exchange, Development of sporting hub at Wilgar Park, Hosford Community Homes: 335 Newtownards Road |
|------|--|

East Belfast – NRF projects at Stage 2 - Development

| Project name | Status | Action/ Recommendation |
|--|--|---|
| Eastside Container Hotel | Stage 2 development complete. Officer is in contact with the group to discuss next steps. | Continue engagement with the group. |
| Impact Belfast | Stage 2 development complete. Officer is in contact with the group to discuss next steps. | Continue engagement with the group. |
| Nevin Spence Centre Visitor Experience | Stage 2 development complete. Officer is in contact with the group to discuss next steps. | Continue engagement with the group. |
| Portview Exchange | Stage 2 development complete. Officer is in contact with the group to discuss next steps. | Continue engagement with the group. |
| Development of sporting hub at Wilgar Park | Consultant has been appointed to develop Business Case. Project development ongoing with estimated completion by end of April 2024. Site visit for Members will be arranged in the coming weeks. | Continue engagement with the group and consultant. Site visit for Members to be arranged. |
| Hosford Community Homes: 335 | Consultant has been appointed to develop Business Case. Project development ongoing with | Continue engagement with |

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| Newtownards Road | estimated completion by end of April 2024. Site visit for Members will be arranged in the coming weeks. | the group and consultant. Site visit for Members to be arranged. |
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7. Capital Programme

The Capital Programme is the rolling programme of enhancing existing Council assets or building / buying new assets. Members are reminded of the 3-stage approval process in place for every project on council's Capital Programme, as agreed by SP&R Committee. The table below provides an update on current live projects in East Belfast. Members are asked to note the status and update.

East Belfast – Capital programme overview

| Project | Status and update |
|--|---|
| New Crematorium | <i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> RIBA Stage 4 Technical Design is complete. Planning Approval received in June 2023. Tender process is underway. Alternative use for existing building is being explored currently. |
| Alleygating Phase 5 – City wide | <i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> In January, SP&R Committee agreed terms of reference for a local inquiry in the event that an objection to a proposed Gating Order is received. Members granted approval for the publication of a Gating Order in November 2023 for certain streets and to proceed with a ten-week consultation for the remaining streets. Members are to be informed via CNS when that consultation process commences. |
| Cremated Remains Burial Plots | <i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Business case is being developed with CN&S Department and surveys are being arranged. |
| Sydenham Greenway | <i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Business case to be worked up with DfI who are at design development stage for the greenway. Ongoing discussion with DfI regarding joint delivery. |
| Shared Youth and Community Facility Inner East | <i>Stage 1- Emerging.</i> Link to Ballymacarrett Area Masterplan. Officers had been liaising with the Education Authority on a potential youth facility at the council owned Ballymacarrett site. Representatives at EA have advised that they are developing a business case for capital funding for youth provision at this site for 2024/25 onwards. Officers are continuing to liaise with EA on the way forward. |
| Ballymacarrett Area Masterplan | <i>Stage 1- Emerging.</i> Link to the Shared Youth and Community Facility Inner East project. |
| Belfast Bikes Expansion | Further expansion: |

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| | <p>Castlereagh Road – complete and operational since August 2023. Sandown Rd carpark – will be installed in Spring 2024.</p> <p>The contract with existing operator that is coming to an end in March 2024, will be extended until the end of the year. The tender for a new provider/ operator will be published in Spring 2024.</p> |
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8. Externally funded programmes

The Council is the delivery partner for a number of government departments on significant capital investment programmes, namely the Urban Villages Initiative (UV) funded by the Executive Office, and number of schemes with DfC. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to East Belfast.

Urban Villages Initiative

| Project | Status and update |
|--|--|
| Pitt Park redevelopment <i>Council asset</i> | <i>Project underway.</i> This UV funded project is on a Council site and the Council is acting as the delivery partner. Contractor started on site in August 2023 and project completion is anticipated in Spring 2024. Ongoing community engagement information sessions are taking place. |
| Hosford Community Homes Inclusion Hub | <i>Project underway.</i> Council is acting as Delivery Partner. Contractor has been appointed with estimated completion in Spring 2025. |
| Pop EastSide- Landmark East <i>Link to SOF project 'Eastside Visitor Centre' and NRF 'Eastside Container Hotel'</i> | <i>Business case stage.</i> Partner project with Urban Villages. The project proposal is for the extension of the existing visitor centre at C.S. Lewis Square. Funding gap identified. Status remains as reported previously - Final draft business case completed and remains with Executive Office. |
| Titanic People Exhibition | <i>Letter of Offer stage.</i> The Council awaits a Letter of Offer from the Executive Office. The contractor is expected on site late Spring 2024 with project completion anticipated by Spring 2025. |
| Portview Exchange <i>Link to NRF 'Portview Exchange'</i> | <i>Business case stage.</i> The Letter of Offer is expected by Autumn 2024 once TEO have approved the business case. |

DfC and Dfl funded projects

Below is the status update on project funded by Department for Infrastructure and the Department for Communities in East Belfast.

Dfl and DfC – East Belfast projects overview

| Project | Status and update |
|---------|-------------------|
|---------|-------------------|

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|---------------------------------------|---|
| Covered cycle stands Phase 3 –East | <p><i>Via DfI Active Travel Enablers Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund</i></p> <p>The third phase of this programme will see the delivery of covered cycle stands in locations at Connswater Community Greenway, Victoria Park, Orangefield Park and Tullycarnet Centre (Comber Greenway).</p> |
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EB Northern Ireland Ltd (Landfill Communities Fund)

One project is receiving capital funding via EBNI in East Belfast:

| Project | Status and update |
|--|---|
| Cherryvale Playing Fields Improvements Pitch 1 | The project involves erection of catch nets, spectator fencing and path on one boundary of Pitch 1 at Cherryvale Playing Fields. All fencing works are complete. Ball catch netting to be installed when ground conditions improve and in advance of season commencing in April 2024. |

Update to Members following site visit - Braniel Community Centre

In September 2023, the East AWG agreed that the Property & Projects Department would undertake a visit to the Braniel Community Centre and report back to the Area Working Group.

Officers visited the centre in September 2023 and discussed the centre, pitch and playground. Officers within City & Neighbourhood Services Department were also contacted. Members are updated as follows:

- The centre is situated at Warren Grove and comprises a main hall, a committee/small meeting room and a youth room. There is an outdoor mini pitch. The centre is a bookable space with no set opening hours. Usage is typically below the target figure for Council centres.
- In terms of the pitch provision, the Council is currently progressing an overall pitches strategy to understand demand for pitches.
- The Braniel playground mean quality score for 2023 was classified as ‘very good’ and the equipment is considered in satisfactory condition.
- A process is underway across the Council in terms of identifying future capital priorities. These requirements are significant across the city. Any suitable external funding sources are also being explored where applicable, and officers continue to work with partners to maximise investment in areas. The discussions to date on Braniel have been captured as part of the list of emerging capital requests and will be considered as part of that wider piece of work moving forward.”

During discussion, the Working Group thanked the Property and Projects Team for their hard work and delivery of worthwhile projects.

After discussion, the Working Group:

- Noted the physical programme update for East Belfast, and;
- Noted the proposed site visits to two of the NRF Stage 2 Projects - Dundela Football, Athletic and Social Club - Development of sporting hub at Wilgar Park, and East Belfast Mission - Hosford Community Homes.

Larder Foodbank Engagement Update

The Neighbourhood Integration Manager reminded the Working Group that, following a members' site visit to The Larder in November 2023, the Working Group had agreed that officers would engage with The Larder on their future plans and report back to the Area Working Group.

She advised that officers had met with the group and discussed its plans for the future. She confirmed that the group had consulted with architects on the purchase and operation of containers to help expand their work but they have found this to be too costly an option, at present.

She highlighted that she had shared details of potential external capital funding opportunities and The Larder had also been linked into the Council's Climate team in City and Organisational Strategy via the Sustainable Food Partnership.

The Working Group noted the information provided and that the Larder might wish to engage further with the Working Group in the future.

Summer Programming Additional Needs - Verbal Update

The Lead Officer - Community Provision explained that children with special needs were often not able to avail of summer schemes due to their high support needs and that a report had recently been submitted to the People and Communities Committee to consider the inclusion of children with special needs in the holiday scheme programme.

He outlined that, in order to contribute to addressing that gap in provision, the Committee had agreed that a request be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, seeking funding for specialist providers to facilitate four additional summer schemes for children with additional needs, one in each area of the City, at a total cost of £80,000 (maximum £20,000 per scheme), which would allow increased numbers of children to participate in summer schemes that were suitable for their needs, with discussions to take place with the relevant Area Working Groups and the Youth Council in advance of any locations being agreed.

During discussion, one Member highlighted that Mitchell House School already used the Alderman Tommy Patton Memorial Park, so would be a good starting point for engagement, together with other special needs schools.

After discussion, the Working Group noted the update and that Members would send the Lead Officer any further recommendations of any particular groups which operated within East Belfast which he might not have yet engaged with.

Request to Present - Hanwood Trust

Alderman Lawlor advised that he had received a request from the Hanwood Trust who operated the football pitch in Tullycarnet. He suggested that they had ambitions plans which they wished to present to the Area Working Group.

The Working Group agreed that representatives of the Hanwood Trust be invited to attend a future meeting of the Working Group.

Chairperson