

North Belfast Area Working Group

Tuesday, 28th May, 2024

NORTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

- Members present: Councillor Bradley (Chairperson);
Alderman McCullough; and
Councillors Cobain, Doran,
Magee, Maskey, Nelson, Ó Néill
and Whyte.
- In attendance: Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director (Operational) City and Neighbourhood
Services;
Mr. D. O’Kane, Planning Manager;
Mr. C. Campfield, Principal Planning Officer;
Ms. M. Wilson, Neighbourhood Services
Integration Manager; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 27th February were approved by the Working Group.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Ó Néill declared an interest in agenda item 5, Summer Scheme Funding (Additional Needs) in that his son was a pupil of Cedar Lodge School, however, he had left the meeting before the item was considered.

Physical Programmes Update

The Director of Property and Projects provided the Working Group with an overview of the undernoted report:

“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 North Belfast including recently completed projects (Appendix 1)
 - Playground Improvement Programme – Loughside Playground
 - LIF - Somme Cross Community Memorial
- Note the stage movements for Malgrove and Cultural Community Hub projects under BIF to *Stage 3 – Committed*.
- Note the reallocation of an additional £68,179 to North NRF and consider any recommendations on allocations to any existing projects or retaining it as a contingency provision.

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 North being allocated £1.127m under LIF1 and £800,000 under LIF2.

Each LIF project proposal is taken through a Due Diligence process prior to any funding award. The table below outlines funding to date for each tranche, at key stages of the delivery process: 43 projects in total have received In Principle support under LIF1 and LIF2, of which 36 have been completed; 4 are at delivery stage; and 3 remain at due diligence/ initial stages.

LIF breakdown – North	LIF 1		LIF 2	
	Projects	Value (£)	Projects	Value (£)
Number of Projects Completed	23 (92%)	£996,500	13 (72%)	£624,867
Number of Projects On-going Delivery	1 (4%)	£66,000	3 (17%)	£143,334
Number of Projects in Pre-construction				
Number of Projects in Initial Stage (Due Diligence)	1 (4%)	£65,000	2 (11%)	£30,000
Total Number of Approved Projects	25*	£1,127,500	18**	£798,201

**This includes additional funding for a LIF 2 project, Ballysillan Youth for Christ.*

*** This includes additional funding for two LIF 1 projects, Marrowbone Parochial Hall and Jennymount Church.*

The table below provides an overview of progress and actions around the remaining live projects. Members are asked to note the status of the current LIF projects and the ongoing actions.

LIF Ref	Project	LIF Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
NLIF2-21	Somme Group – cross community memorial	£21,667	Complete	Project complete except for final minor snagging work which is due to be complete shortly.	Continue engagement with group.
NLIF2-22	Sailortown, St. Joseph's Church Refurbishment	£75,000	On Ground	On ground. HED approval received and construction work on gallery continues.	Continue engagement with group and HED.
NLIF2-19	Women's Tec	£46,667	On Ground	On ground. Work progressing.	Continue engagement with Group
NLIF057	Ardoyne Holy Cross Boxing Club <i>(Link to UV project – ABC Trust H&L Hub)</i>	£66,000	On Ground/ Due Diligence stage	On ground. Phase 1 works are complete. Boxing Club LIF project will be part of Phase 2 underway and meetings with the group are taking place.	Continue engagement with Group and with UV
NLIF014	Westland Community Centre - new building <i>(Link to UV Project)</i>	£65,000	Due Diligence stage	Partnership project with UV. Work is progressing on the land arrangements and the governance model. A Letter of Offer is awaited from the Executive Office.	Continue engagement with Group and TEO
NLIF2-05	Mercy Primary, Crumlin Road	£15,000	Due Diligence stage	Agreed in June 2016. As agreed at the AWG in Feb 2024, a letter was sent to the school to determine if they wish to remain in the process, with a decision deadline of 30 May 2024. An officer has since met school reps and the project was discussed at Due Diligence in April 2024.	Continue engagement with the school and information will be brought to DD in June 2024 for approval.

NLIF2-03	Holy Cross Trust/ Houben Centre (<i>The Parent Room</i>)	£15,000	Due Diligence stage	Agreed in June 2018. As agreed at the previous NAWG in February 2024, a letter was sent to the group to determine if they wish to remain in the process, with a decision deadline of 30 May 2024. A response is awaited.	Continue engagement with Group.
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4. Belfast Investment Fund

Members are reminded that BIF is a £28m investment fund for regeneration partnership projects, with a minimum £250k investment from Council BIF – North Belfast was allocated £5.5m. In North Belfast, 7 projects have received an In-Principle funding commitment under BIF, thereby fully allocating its £5.5m: and 2 projects are 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.

Members are asked to note the status update of these projects provided below. The table provides a summary of BIF allocated projects i.e. project stage; project title; and funding allocated.

Summary of BIF allocated projects

North	Stage 3 - Cancer Lifeline—£575k; Grace Family Centre —£1.3m; Midland Boxing Club £550k; Marrowbone Park £750k; Cavehill Tennis Club- £71k Stage 2- Malgrove- £950k, Cultural Community Hub - £350k Stage 1 - Cliftonville Community Forum, Sunningdale Community Centre - no commitment
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BIF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
BIF49	Cavehill Tennis Club	£71,413	On Ground	Final element of works (resurfacing) is underway and due to complete shortly.	Continue engagement with the group.
BIF15	Malgrove	£1,758,607	Uncommitted - Design stage	Detailed design agreed for a 4-team changing pavilion. Planning submitted and verified. Planning have requested further site	Continue engagement with the group. Move to Stage 3 - Committed

				surveys which are currently ongoing. Project will be taken in to Due Diligence following Planning approval and return of tenders.	
BIF43	Cultural Community Hub	£350,000	Uncommitted – Design stage	Planning approval was granted on 3 May 2024. Procurement preparation is underway. Project will be taken in to Due Diligence following return of tenders.	Continue engagement with the group and stakeholders. Move to Stage 3 - Committed

5. Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

The Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF) is a capital fund with a current overall budget of £10,280,000 to help groups deliver capital projects that will make a real, long-term difference in their communities. Members will note that in April 2024, Council agreed an additional allocation of £280,000 to NRF on top of the original £10m. Following the agreed funding allocation model and the agreed project pathway, the overall NRF allocation for North has therefore increased from £2,434,979 to £2,503,158, an increase of £68,179. It was also agreed that any additional funding is only allocated to existing projects which have already passed the threshold level and/or already been agreed at Stage 3 - Delivery.

Each NRF 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.

North Belfast – NRF overview

North	<p>Stage 3— Belfast Orange Hall, Ulster Supported Employment Ltd (USEL), Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum, Sailortown Regeneration Group, Ardoyne Youth Enterprises,</p> <p>Stage 1 (Reserve)— <i>Cumann Cultúrtha Mhic Reachtain, Indian Community Centre, North Belfast Working Men's Club, North City Business Centre, Quaker Service, Belfast Charitable Society, Sinclair Seamen's Presbyterian Church, Arts for All, Ligoniel Improvement Association</i></p>
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North Belfast – NRF projects at Stage 3- Delivery

Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
USEL - Green Growth & The Circular Economy	£518,191	Stage 3-Committed	<i>Procurement stage has been initiated for the integrated design team.</i>	Continue engagement with the group.
Cliftonville Community Enterprise	£1,452,700	Stage 3-Committed	Procurement of integrated design team is well underway.	Continue engagement with the group.
Ardoyne Youth Enterprises – Community Hub	£154,696	Stage 3-Committed	Link to UV programme. Remediation works on the contaminated site are ongoing and the team is managing the associated rising costs and delays. Outstanding legal issues are being progressed.	Continue engagement with the group.
Belfast Orange Hall Refurbishment	£154,696	Stage 3-Committed	Further to Members' agreement in Feb that the project would progress with a reduced scope of works, the consultant is now being procured on this basis.	Continue engagement with the group.
St Joseph's Restoration project	£154,696	Stage 3-Committed	Officers met with the group and identified elements of the restoration project that can be delivered with a reduced budget.	Continue engagement with the group. Prepare quotation for the appointment of an architect.

Members are asked to note the reallocation of an additional £68,179 to North NRF and consider any recommendations on allocations to existing projects or retaining it as a contingency provision.

6. Capital Programme

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

Members are asked to note the updates on the Physical Programme.

North Belfast – Capital programme overview

Project	Status and update
North Foreshore - Development Sites Infrastructure Works	On ground. The Landfill Gas Ring Main tender has been reviewed due to material price increases and will be re-issued with returns anticipated in Summer 2024. Foul Pumping Station to be tendered before Summer 2024. NIE connection required for future supply is being progressed.
Reservoir Safety Programme (links to PeacePlus)	Stage 3 - Committed. Works to Alexandra Park, Waterworks Upper and Waterworks Lower. Consultants appointed and undertaking investigative work to assess the existing condition of the reservoirs and associated structures. The application has been submitted under PeacePLUS Theme 1.4 and clarifications were received in April. Consultant has been appointed to work up the project to planning stage. Public consultation closed in March 2024. It is anticipated that SEUPB will consider the applications in late Aug 2024.
Cathedral Gardens (including Belfast Blitz)	Stage 3 – Committed. Design team is continuing to develop the project to RIBA Stage 3 – Spatial Coordination. Stakeholder engagement ongoing, including discussion with NI War Memorial on Belfast Blitz element. Aim to submit planning application by end of June 2024.
Playground Improvement Programme	Stage 3 – Committed. Loughside Park playground - Project complete. New Lodge playground is scheduled to be completed in June 2024.
Alleygating Phase 5 – City wide	Stage 3 – Committed. 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. Committee agreed 51 gates in May and works will progress once ratified by full council in June. Approval will be sought to proceed at more locations in June and September 2024.
LTP - Girdwood Indoor Sports Facility	Stage 2 – Uncommitted. DfC partnership project. Officers are currently responding to comments from DfC on the business case. Design team has been re-mobilised and is developing designs to Planning stage.
Relocation of Dunbar Link Cleansing Depot	Stage 2 – Uncommitted. OBC being worked up. Viable alternative site at Corporation Street Car Park being assessed by design team. Designs progressing to RIBA Stage 3-4 up to planning application stage. Confirmation of design requirements is progressing. Anticipated that

	planning application will be submitted in August 2024.
Glencairn Park/ Ligoniel Park Greenway	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Project outline details submitted to DfI as part of the Greenway Development priority projects.
Access to the Hills – connections from Cavehill to Divis Mountain and Black Mountain	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Will also be considered within the wider study as below.
Waste Plan – Waste Transfer Station Upgrade	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> OBC being worked up. Link to Duncrue Masterplan and citywide kerbside scheme.
Connectivity - Access to Hills Programme (city wide)	<i>Stage 1- Emerging.</i> Secured DAERA funding for the Access to the Belfast Hills Feasibility Study. Study and delivery plan was completed in April 2023. Ongoing consultation with other stakeholders. Presented to Members in Autumn 2023. Three of the identified routes submitted in the Peace Plus Local Action Plan application.
Belfast Bikes Expansion	Expansion in the North area for Phase 4: <i>Yorkgate</i> – Translink have confirmed that the area for the Belfast Bikes docking station will be complete in August 2024.

7. Externally funded programmes

The Council is the delivery partner for several government departments on key capital investment programmes, including Urban Villages (UV) from the Executive Office and Peace IV under SEUPB. The following is an overview of projects within each programme relevant to North Belfast.

Urban Villages Initiative

The table below shows the status on UV projects in North Belfast – note the UV programme has a defined North Belfast geography (Ardoyne and Greater Ballysillan).

North Belfast – Urban Villages Initiative overview

Project	Status and update
ABC Trust Health and Leisure Hub (links to LIF programme)	On ground. Partnership project with UV DfC, DfI and Flax Trust. Phase 1 of the project completed which provided a modern, purpose-built sports hall, support space and accommodation for BCT NI. Phase 2 works are progressing with completion anticipated middle 2025.
Ballysillan Playing Fields	Partnership project with UV, DfC and DfI Living With Water Programme. Planning approval secured. Due to inflationary pressures project costs have escalated from projections. Awaiting confirmation of business case addendum from TEO. Tender process complete. It is anticipated that a main contractor will be appointed and on site in Summer 2024 subject to confirmation of funding from funder.

Ardoyne Youth Enterprises (AYE) Social Enterprise Project <i>(links to NRF programme)</i>	As above at NRF. Partnership project with Urban Villages. Remediation works on the contaminated site are ongoing and the team is managing the associated rising costs and delays. Outstanding legal issues are being progressed.
Sunningdale Community Centre	Council is acting as delivery agent for project proposed on Council land. Lease is being finalised. Planning application submitted and gathering of reports and surveys to support the planning application is continuing. Scheduled to begin on site in late summer/ early autumn subject to Planning.
Westland Community Centre <i>(links to LIF programme)</i>	As above under LIF. Partnership project with UV. Work is progressing on the land arrangements and the governance model. A Letter of Offer is awaited from the Executive Office.

Peace IV/ Peace Plus

Members are asked to note the update on Peace IV - Forth Meadow Community Greenway and the proposed Reconnected Belfast project under Peace Plus.

Project	Status and update
Forth Meadow Community Greenway project	Project completed. Signage package to be installed subject to agreement via Committee and Council.
Reconnected Belfast - Waterworks and Alexandra Park	<i>As above at Capital Programme.</i> The Reconnected Belfast proposal focuses on the redevelopment of the Waterworks and Alexandra Park. The proposal will enhance and improve connectivity within and between the two parks as well as enhance linkages with other parts of the city and to the Belfast Hills. The application has been submitted under PeacePLUS Theme 1.4 and clarifications were received in April. Consultant has been appointed to work up the project to planning stage. Public consultation closed in March 2024. It is anticipated that SEUPB will consider the applications in late Aug 2024.”

At the request of a Member, the Director of Property and Projects agreed to liaise with the South Eastern Education and Library Board regarding a pitch at the Shore Road which it might be willing to transfer to Council ownership and to provide an update at a future meeting.

The Working Group noted the update report and agreed to consider the reallocation of an additional £68,179 to North NRF and any recommendations on allocations to any existing projects or whether to retain it as a contingency provision at the next meeting of the Working Group.

LDP – Local Policies Plan – verbal update

The Principal Planning Officer and the Senior Planning Officer provided the Working Group with an overview of the work which was ongoing in respect of the Emerging Local Policies Plan.

The Principal Planning Officer explained that the Plan Strategy was adopted in May 2023 and set out the Council’s growth strategy up to 2035. The Working Group was advised

that it mirrored the aims of the Belfast Agenda and set out operational policies against which all planning applications would be assessed. The LPP would set out development zonings and Key Site Requirements and other site specific proposals related to sites and allocations.

The Members were advised that a Call for Sites had closed on 1st March, 2024, which provided an early opportunity for engagement to suggest sites, for example, for housing or commercial retail. Belfast was the first authority to do this in Northern Ireland and it had provided an opportunity to draw in a variety of stakeholders, mostly targeting private land assets.

The Working Group was provided with an overview of Lands for Protection within North Belfast, including the Settlement Development Limit, Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character.

The Members highlighted the challenges of HMOs in the city, problems associated with land banking, the need for vesting powers and open spaces/green areas within new developments.

The Members were advised that officers would plan workshops to discuss the LPP with Members in more detail.

Noted.

Citywide Strategic Site Assessments

The Director of City Regeneration and Development drew the Members' attention to a report which provided an update in terms of the Strategic Site Assessment (SSA) programme across the city. She explained that this followed previous decisions of the Strategic Policy and Resources and City Growth Committees to undertake strategic site assessments of Council owned lands across the city to identify potential for housing led or mixed-use regeneration, either in isolation or in partnership with the private/voluntary sector or other statutory agencies. She referred to the report which had been circulated which highlighted that housing led regeneration had been identified as a corporate priority and a priority within the Belfast Agenda. Following a recommendation of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in September 2023, it was agreed to bring emerging proposals in respect of Council assets city wide to respective Area Working Groups.

The Director provided an update in respect of the Strategic Site Assessments (SSA) Phase 1 which included a number of strategic Council owned city centre lands as well as a partnership approach in respect of adjoining public sector lands. Concept regeneration plans, community and stakeholder engagement and planning Pre-Application Discussions had been undertaken in respect of a number of cluster sites, some of which were located in the northern part of the city centre. She advised that, following the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee decision of September 2023, the Council was currently undertaking a Competitive Dialogue procurement process for a long-term partner for the delivery of housing led placemaking regeneration across these sites, as part of a multi-site residential-led mixed-use regeneration development opportunity. She advised that recommendations on the outcome of this would be submitted to Elected Members later in the year.

The Members were also reminded that it had previously been reported to both the City Growth and Regeneration and Strategic Policy and Resources Committees in September 2023, that a Development Brief for lands in the ownership of the Department for Communities (DfC) and Belfast City Council at Little Donegall St/Library St /Kent St (the Inner North West Development Brief) had been reissued following input from DfC (as the land owner of part of the lands) and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE). The Members were reminded

that this Development Brief process had previously been paused at the request of Members. In line with the Committee decision, the reframed brief had been issued to all 15 developing Housing Associations, with a deadline for return of 28th June 2024.

The Director also referred to the Housing Led Regeneration Group which had been established under the Belfast Agenda Community Planning structures, chaired by NIHE CX and included senior officers from BCC, NIHE, DFC, LPS and SIB. She reported that a key task of this group had been to identify and map public lands across the city with potential for housing led regeneration as well as identifying strategic private sector land opportunities and exploring partnership opportunities and identifying barriers to delivery and potential solutions.

As a second phase of the Strategic Site Assessments programme, and as agreed by Council, a comprehensive assessment had been undertaken in respect of Council lands across the city to ascertain the potential for housing led and /or mixed-use regeneration. This had also included working in partnership with other public sector bodies as part of the Housing Led Regeneration Group to include a wider public land review and where appropriate to also include private sector land.

With the aid of PowerPoint, the Director updated the Working Group with further information in respect of the ongoing SSA work. She advised that the policy context across the various policies and plans included:

- By 2035 to deliver to 31,600 new homes, with 8,000 units within city centre and to increase population by 66,000 people;
- To increase city centre living across all tenure types;
- To identify publicly owned land for housing and mixed use developments;
- To see Belfast transition to an inclusive, low carbon climate resilient economy; and
- To recognise that housing was an equivocal lever for economic development.

She referred to various barriers and challenges associated with demand and housing supply and the potential role for Council. The Members considered and discussed potential assessments/options for housing led/mixed use regeneration for various Council owned lands identified through this SSA process in the North of the city. It was highlighted that these were intended to be initial high level options for consideration by the Members to help inform next steps.

The Director advised that officers had been working with Mr K. Carlin, Carlin Planning Ltd, to consider potential options for the various lands. Mr. Carlin was welcomed to the meeting. With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, the Director and Mr. Carlin provided the Working Group with further information in respect of the ongoing SSA work.

A Member referred to various options that had been presented in respect of one of the sites where housing and alternative mixed use community-based options had been presented and expressed concern at the inclusion of housing with the exclusion of other potential uses for this location. He advised that he had been in discussions with officers to consider community and business-based uses for the site.

Given the finite suitability of public lands across the city, the Members were encouraged to advise officers of any lands they considered might potentially have housing led regeneration potential and which could be assessed through the work of the Housing Led Regeneration Group referenced above.

Noted.

Summer Scheme Funding (Additional Needs)

The Director of Neighbourhood Services reminded the Members that it had been agreed at the February meeting of the People and Communities Committee that £20,000 would be allocated to each of the four areas of the city for specialist providers to facilitate four additional summer schemes for children with additional needs.

The Working Group considered a report which detailed the proposals received from potential providers to deliver summer scheme activities for children with additional needs in north Belfast.

He drew the Members' attention to the below table which summarised the proposals received from the potential providers, based on engagement within the sector:

Provider	Extent of Support	Age group	
174 Trust Disability Project	children and young people who have severe learning disability, wheelchair users, sight loss, autistic, challenging behaviour and life limiting illnesses	0-4; 5-11; 12-15; 16-18	Detailed proposal received £10,013 for four weeks
Cedar Lodge School	Children and young people young people have complex special educational needs and additional complex medical needs	3 -16 years old	Detailed proposal received £13,771 for one week. 62 participants each day. Children not in other provision

The Working Group agreed to support a recommendation to provide an amount of £13,771 for Cedar Lodge School for one week of programming and an amount of £6,725 for 174 Trust to provide one week of programming.

Request to Present – North Belfast Community Partnership

The Neighbourhood Services Integration Manager advised the Members that the Neighbourhood Renewal Partnerships (NRPs) had facilitated several sessions for key stakeholders over the last number of months to explore the potential of developing a new North Belfast Community Partnership, this would replace the North Belfast Partnership Board, and would have a number of working groups linked to the strategic themes of People, Place, Pride and Prosperity. She advised that the Chairs of the NRPs had requested an opportunity to present to the Working Group on the work to date.

The Working Group granted permission for representative from the North Belfast Community Partnership to present at a future meeting.

Chairperson