

North Belfast Area Working Group

Tuesday, 25th February, 2025

NORTH BELFAST AREA WORKING GROUP

Members present: Councillor Doran (Chairperson);
Alderman McCullough; and
Councillors Bradley, Cobain, Magee,
Maskey, Murphy, Nelson and O'Neill.

In attendance: Mr. D. Logan, Physical Programmes Delivery
Manager;
Ms. M. Wilson, Neighbourhood Services Integration
Manager; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 26th November were approved by the Working Group.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Presentation

BHSCT – Fostering

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. A. McLaughlin to the meeting.

Ms. McLaughlin explained that there was a fostering crisis within the Belfast Trust and were undertaking to spread awareness of the situation and encourage potential carers to come forward.

She explained that there was almost children and young people living in care in Northern Ireland, 84% of which were living in foster care. She stated that the numbers had been increasing year on year which had resulted in a need to increase the number of carers through a recruitment campaign and informed the Members that information sessions had been scheduled at various venues in north Belfast.

She outlined the various types of foster care and stated that a new scheme, Supported Lodgings, for 16-21 years olds who were in full time education or employment, whereby, rather than a foster carer, a host would offer supported living to a young person and assist them towards independence.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. McLaughlin for her presentations and commended the scheme and asked the Working Group to support and promote the campaign.

Noted.

Sustainable Food Partnership

(Ms. M. Quigley, Adaptation and Resilience Advisor, attended in connection with this item.)

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. M. Turley, Community Garden Support NI, to the meeting.

The Adaptation and Resilience Advisor provided the Working Group with an overview of the work which was ongoing in developing a Sustainable Food Strategy for the City. She outlined that the Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership had been established in August 2023 and that it acted as a collective voice for the city on key challenges for the food system around climate change, biodiversity, food justice, a circular economy, urban farming, community growing, food waste and more.

She highlighted that they were mindful of Motions which had been passed by the Council, which covered issues such as the Right to Food, the Right to Grow and the Plant Based Treaty and would be progressing those as part of the work.

Ms. M. Turley outlined the extensive work which was being undertaken by several stakeholders, including Community Garden Support NI.

Noted.

Physical Programmes Update

The Physical Programmes Delivery Manager provided 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 project at Appendix 1 - Covered cycle stands;**
- Note the announcement of Urban Villages Initiative capital funding from The Executive Office to projects in receipt of Council funding – LIF Westland Community Centre, and;**
- Note the status and next steps around the additional local capital schemes/ proposals as a consequence of the UKSPF funding.**

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 38 have been completed; 2 are at delivery stage; 1 at pre-construction stage, and 1 remain at due diligence/ initial stage.

LIF breakdown – North	LIF 1		LIF 2	
	Projects	Value (£)	Projects	Value (£)
Number of Projects Completed	23 (92%)	£996,500	15 (83%)	£693,201
Number of Projects On-going Delivery	1 (4%)	£66,000	1 (11%)	£75,000
Number of Projects in Pre-construction			1 (6%)	15,000
Number of Projects in Initial Stage (Due Diligence)	1 (4%)	£65,000		
Total Number of Approved Projects	25*	£1,127,500	17**	£783,201

**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
NLIF2-22	Sailortown, St. Joseph's Church Refurbishment	£75,000	On Ground	On ground. Construction work ongoing on the gallery.	Continue engagement with group and HED.
NLIF057	Ardoyne Holy Cross Boxing Club (UV – ABC Trust Hub)	£66,000	On Ground	On ground. The overall Urban Villages scheme will also incorporate this LIF scheme. Overall scheme is progressing well with Phase 2 completion anticipated by Winter 2025.	Continue engagement with Group and with UV

NLIF2-05	Mercy Primary, Crumlin Road	£15,000	On Ground	Funding agreement signed. Outdoor play equipment has been ordered and awaiting delivery.	Continue engagement with school.
NLIF014	Westland Community Centre - new building <i>(Link to UV Project)</i>	£65,000	Due Diligence stage	TEO have confirmed approx £1m capital funding for this project under Urban Villages. Procurement of design team ongoing.	Continue engagement with Group and TEO

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 - Cavehill Tennis Club- £71k, Malgrove -£950k, Cultural Community Hub - £350k Stage 1 - Cliftonville Community Forum, Sunningdale Community Centre - no commitment
--------------	---

BIF Ref	Project	Funding	Stage	Status	Action/ Recommendation
BIF15	Malgrove	£1,758,607	Stage 3 - Committed	Awaiting a Planning decision. Planning is awaiting two statutory consultee responses.	Continue engagement with planners.
BIF43	Cultural Community Hub	£350,000	Stage 3 - Committed	Discussions with external funders ongoing to address budgetary shortfall prior to appointment of contractor.	Continue engagement with the group and stakeholders.

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. The overall NRF allocation for North was £2,503,158 which 5 projects received an In Principle funding commitment and a contingency sum has also been retained. 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	Stage 3— Belfast Orange Hall, Ulster Supported Employment Ltd (USEL), Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum, Sailortown Regeneration Group, Ardoyne Youth Enterprises, 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>
--------------	---

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	Procurement of works commencing this month. Designs have been updated.	Continue engagement with the group.
Cliftonville Community Enterprise	£1,452,700	Stage 3- Committed	Meeting held with design team. Land boundary issue identified and being addressed - DfC has started vesting process of land required.	Continue engagement with the group.
Ardoyne Youth Enterprises – Community Hub <i>(Link to UV Project)</i>	£154,696	Stage 3- Committed	Main funder TEO is updating the business case as estimates have risen significantly. Additional funding opportunities being explored.	Continue engagement with the group.
Belfast Orange Hall Refurbishment	£154,696	Stage 3- Committed	Procurement stage. Team is working to bring the project within budget.	Continue engagement with the group.
St Joseph's Restoration project	£154,696	Stage 3- Committed	Structural survey finalised. Design team appointed.	Continue engagement with the group.

LIF funding reallocation - Members will be aware that in December it was agreed that officers would engage with Ardoyne Youth Club and Benview Community Centre in terms of the reallocation of £15,000. Members are advised that this work is ongoing and an update on project proposals will be brought back to the next meeting for consideration.

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
Playground Improvement Programme 24/25	On ground. City-wide playgrounds improvements. Works at three sites across the city including Michelle Baird Memorial Playground. To be completed by end of March 2025.
Sporting Pitches Investment 24/25	On ground. Works being undertaken at four sites across the city including Mallusk Playing Fields. To be completed by end of March 2025.
North Foreshore - Development Sites Infrastructure Works	On ground. Landfill Gas pipework infrastructure contractor recently appointed. Procurement on Foul Pumping Station is almost complete. NIE upgrade connections to fully service the site development to start in April.
North Foreshore - Giant’s Park	A complex development agreement is now in place with Giant’s Park Belfast Limited (GPBL). This agreement commits GPBL to deliver over 250 acres of phased development over a number of years in four distinct hubs: Adventure Hub, Welcome Hub, Pit Stop Hub, Distributions and Logistics Hub. The first planning application for the Adventure Hub was submitted in December 2024. Construction works are expected to commence on site in late 2025.
Reservoir Safety Programme <i>(links to PEACEPLUS)</i>	<i>Stage 3 Committed.</i> Reservoir improvements at Waterworks and Alexandra Park. SEUPB PEACEPLUS funding application has been successful, securing €13.5m funding to enhance shared space and connectivity within and between Waterworks and Alexandra Park area of North Belfast. The technical design is currently being developed.
Cathedral Gardens (including Belfast Blitz)	<i>Stage 3 Committed.</i> Technical design stage work ongoing. Planning approval granted 11 February 2025. Belfast Blitz memorial forms part of the overall scheme.
Alleygating Phase 5 – City wide	<i>Stage 3 – Committed.</i> Works progressing. To be completed by end of March 2025.
LTP - Girdwood Indoor Sports Facility	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> DfC partnership project. Design team continues to develop designs to Planning Stage. Officers continue to respond to queries from DfC regarding the business case.
Relocation of Dunbar Link Cleansing Depot	<i>Stage 2 – Uncommitted.</i> Viable alternative site at Corporation Street Car Park being assessed by design team. As for easement requirement for NI Water pipe, previous layout of the building has been changed. Architects have been completed RIBA Stage 2 Concept Design stage.

Waste Plan – Waste Transfer Station Upgrade	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> OBC being worked up. Link to Duncrue Masterplan and citywide kerbside scheme.
Access to the Hills - Glencairn Park/ Ligoniel Park	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Part of the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. Complementary scheme to developing further connections to the Hills at Ligoniel, Glencairn and Cavehill. PEACEPLUS funding has been received.
Access to the Hills – connections from Cavehill to Divis Mountain and Black Mountain	<i>Stage 2- Uncommitted.</i> Complementary scheme to developing further connections to the Hills at Ligoniel, Glencairn and Cavehill.
Connectivity - Access to Hills Programme (city wide)	<i>Stage 1- Emerging.</i> Feasibility study presented to Members in Autumn 2023.
Belfast Bikes Expansion	Expansion in the North area for Phase 4 - Yorkgate was installed in November 2024. The tender for a new provider/ operator has been concluded and contract will be signed in February.

Additional small scale local capital schemes

Due to securing UKSPF monies for a range of existing capital schemes, this has allowed the Council to free up resources for other activity. Council capital funds are therefore being redirected towards a range of additional small scale local capital schemes that still align with the prioritised objectives of the UKSPF as expected by the funder. In January, Members at SP&R Committee noted this update and that a further update will be brought to the AWGs for consideration. This activity can begin in this financial year and extend into 2025/26 to allow for development and completion of the projects. The proposal for these recouped capital monies is to target a range of small scale capital schemes focusing on sporting provision and access and inclusion. Projects within North area are shown below along with the projects that have a citywide focus:

<i>Additional local capital schemes – North</i>	
Loughside Playing Fields	Modular changing and flexible space facility
Mobile Changing Places modular facility	This facility can be used across the city. Specification developed and initial quotation received - next step is procurement.
Inclusive Makaton communications boards in playgrounds	Communication boards across council playgrounds.
Historic Cemeteries	Initial works at historic cemeteries

Members will also be aware that party briefings were held late last year on the Capital Programme and that a number of further Capital Thematic workshops/briefings are to be arranged with Members to inform the longer term Capital Programme. As part of this exercise, a series of further improvement projects will come forward in conjunction with City & Neighbourhoods Services Department.

Further, the Property & Projects Department continues to actively scan for potential additional sources of external funding that can be secured for capital proposals.

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 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 <i>(links to LIF programme NLIF057)</i>	Partnership project with DfC, Dfl, Flax Trust, and UV. Phase 2 progressing well with completion anticipated in late 2025.
Ballysillan Playing Fields	Partnership project with UV, DfC and Dfl. Contractor appointed and on site. Planning conditions to be discharged by contractor prior to major works commencement which is expected in March 2025. Tree removal scheme to commence February 2025 in line with recent notification to Members.
Ardoyne Youth Enterprises (AYE) Social Enterprise Project <i>(links to NRF programme)</i>	<i>As above at NRF.</i> Main funder TEO is updating the business case as estimates have risen significantly. Additional funding opportunities being explored.
Sunningdale Community Centre <i>(links to BIF programme)</i>	Council is acting as delivery agent for project proposed on Council land. Planning not secured. UV remain committed to supporting the project. Currently working with the group to explore a suitable alternative site.
Westland Community Centre <i>(links to LIF programme)</i>	<i>As above under LIF.</i> TEO have confirmed £1m capital funding for this project under Urban Villages. Procurement of design team ongoing.

PEACE IV and PEACEPLUS – Capital Projects

Members are asked to note updates on the capital projects that are related to the PEACE Programmes.

North Belfast – Capital Projects overview

Project	Status and update
Forth Meadow Community Greenway	Project completed. Signage package subject to agreement.

Reconnected Belfast - Waterworks and Alexandra Park	SEUPB PEACEPLUS funding application has been successful, securing €13.5m funding to enhance shared space and connectivity within and between Waterworks and Alexandra Park area of North Belfast. Engagement ongoing with Design Information Sessions taking place in February and March. Work ongoing to secure Planning approval and procure Design Team.
Access to the Hills – Glencairn/ Ligoniel	Part of the Belfast PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. Complementary scheme to developing further connections to the Hills at Ligoniel, Glencairn and Cavehill. PEACEPLUS funding has been received.

Dfl funded projects

Below is the status update on project funded by Department for Infrastructure in North Belfast.

Dfl – North Belfast projects overview

Project	Status and update
Covered cycle stands	<i>Via Dfl Active Travel Enablers Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund</i> Funding was received for Phase 3; locations comprise Grove Leisure Centre, Ballysillan Leisure Centre and Marrowbone Park. Work is complete.

In response to a question from a Member, the Physical Programmes Delivery Manager agreed to provide information to the Working Group in relation to withheld NRF monies.

The Working Group:

- Noted the Physical Programme update for North Belfast that included covered cycle stands;
- Noted the announcement of Urban Villages Initiative capital funding from The Executive Office to projects in receipt of Council funding – LIF Westland Community Centre, and
- Noted the status and next steps around the additional local capital schemes/ proposals as a consequence of the UKSPF funding.

Chairperson